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Home Improvement

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Harold Hale stands in the greenhouse he lovingly tends at Union Villa.

Photo by Bill Lanning

Gardening a labor of love for him

By NANCY HOSKIN

His passion for gardening began as a young boy in England and for three years he has made his much-loved hobby brighten the days of fellow residents at Union Villa.

Harold Hale, who boasts that his birthday changes with the years (he is 86), tends to the greenhouse and outdoor patios at the retirement community in Unionville.

Before he moved to Union Villa three years ago, the greenhouse had not been used. Flower boxes were not filled and common areas were lacking the extra special care that Mr. Hale is now famous for. Mr. Hale manages to supply all

the flowers and plants surrounding the complex.

"I have always been interested in plants and flowers, ever since I was a boy, milking cows on my dad's farm in England. I remember picking wild flowers in the field and admiring different plants. I had not noticed before," said Mr. Hale.

Mr. Hale, who moved to Union Villa soon after his wife's death, realized that people spent too much time in their rooms.

He thought that the greenhouse would make an ideal common area, one where people could get together, bring family and friends

and see beautiful greenery and flowers.

When Mr. Hale began the task of filling the greenhouse, he rescued plants that fellow residents threw away. When people thought their plants were beyond hope, Mr. Hale knew better.

He would nurse them back to health and display them in the greenhouse for everyone to enjoy, not to mention the amazement of their former owners.

All the plants in the greenhouse have come from those it have rescued or that have been donated. The money we earn at the Unionville activities for selling house plants, usually, is enough to buy the soil and ferti-

lizer I need for the year," Mr. Hale said.

Mr. Hale's greenhouse is currently filled with newly sprouted geranium seedlings which will be used for Union Villa's front garden next summer, and he will soon decide what flowers he would like to plant in the window boxes along the outside windows.

"I think that gardening is good for the nerves. You can forget about your worries and relax. I think everyone should take it up, especially in this fast-paced world," Mr. Hale said.

Mr. Hale spends two hours each morning looking over his family of plants, taking time to explain which ones are able

particularly well and answering any questions his visitors may have.

He's then back in the afternoon, usually from 3:30 until 4:30 p.m., making sure they're properly watered, ventilation is good and that each one has had a bit of tender loving care.

Mr. Hale, who's very proud of his plants, will be glad to show visitors around his greenhouse. Whether you want to learn more about different varieties, buy a healthy house plant or just donate one which you think will never make it, Mr. Hale is the person to visit. And if you have a few spare minutes, he'd love to challenge you to a game of cribbage.