

### Let's Get Growing

## Pack your bags knowing garden is taken care of during summer vacation

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Correspondent

Now that your garden has survived the trauma of a severe drought, another hurdle must be faced - this is the time of year when many gardeners take vacations.

Obviously the best way to care for your garden while you are away is to hire someone, a teenager or senior citizen perhaps, and leave written instructions. If this is not possible then here are some important steps to prevent your garden from becoming a jungle while you're gone.

Let's begin with your lawn. The temptation is to cut the grass very short before leaving but this is unwise. Grass should not be cut shorter than two and a half inches during the summer. If the clippings are fine leave them on to act as a moisture-retaining mulch. When you return, your grass may be very high. Cut it once with your mower set as high as possible and then cut again several days later with the mower set at two and a half inches.

In the vegetable gardens harvest all produce which is ready. If you vacation at the same time every year, plan that no crops peak while you are away. For several years my neighbor missed out on the best of her green beans because she was on holiday. Then she realized that if she planted her beans in mid-June rather than the end of May they would be just beginning to produce when she returned. Tie any staked vegetables as high as possible. As soon as cauliflower heads reach the size of a quar-

ter, tie up the larger outer leaves to keep the sun from discoloring these heads. Remove closely spaced seedlings to allow room for maximum development. Check your fruit trees. There are often several tiny apples in a cluster. Remove all but one per group to allow growing room and to prevent a heavy load from breaking the branch.

In the flower bed remove all blooms and large buds to prevent seed formation. Stake and tie tall plants to prevent wind damage. This is a good time to cut back straggly annuals to half their size. No one will see their shorn appearance and by the time you return they will be bushy and almost ready to bloom again.

Hanging baskets simply cannot go more than a day or two without watering. If you can't arrange this, take them down and plunge the pot into the soil in a shady spot.

Of course you will water everything deeply before you leave. If you have not already applied a mulch, consider doing so. Choose from cocoa beans, bark mulch or bark chips.

The most certain thing about a garden is that the weeds will grow no matter what the conditions. So before you go, remove all the weeds, even the little ones.

Insects and diseases never take vacations. Just before leaving, make an inspection tour, picking and destroying any obvious pests. Bad infestations should be treated with insecticidal soap or pyrethrin. Where diseases are concerned, prevention is important. Black spot on roses and powdery mildew on roses and other

susceptible plants (zinnia, lila, phlox, monarda) can be averted by a spray of baking soda. Dissolve one teaspoon of baking soda in one quart of warm water. Add one teaspoon of insecticidal

soap (this helps the solution cling to leaves for a longer period). Spray susceptible plants being sure to cover the undersides of the leaves. Then pack your bags and "bon voyage".

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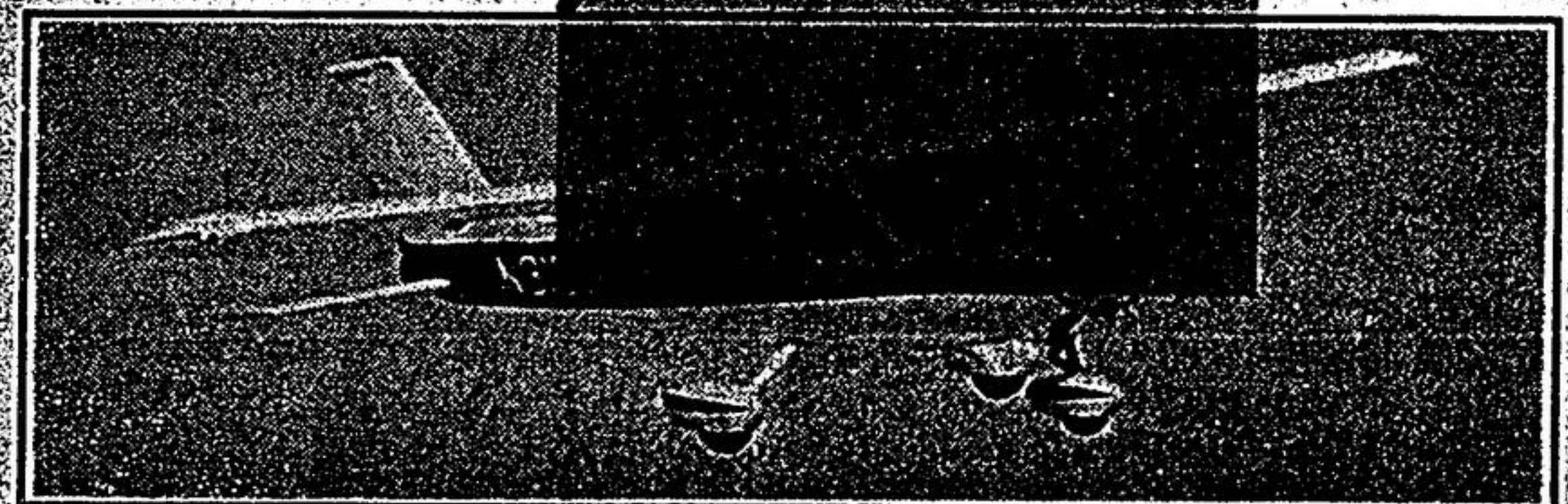
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