

GARDENING LETTERS
by Doug Green

Have I got lots of stuff to write about now. Our trip to Florida to a garden writers conference was just terrific and I picked up lots of garden hints and tips which I'll be passing along to you in the next few columns. Please put up with my enthusiasm but having absorbed more sunshine in 7 days in Florida than in 75 days at Simple Gifts Farm this summer I confess to being a little biased about my trip.

Before the start of the goodies, let me remind all of you that a good garden cleanup will help prevent a lot of problems next year. If you plow or roto-till now, the plant residue will be well deteriorated before next planting time. Research has shown that yields are greater if the garden or field is fall plowed. If your garden is like mine, there are also a few weeds around that did not get yanked this summer. They should be removed as well because they are hiding places for bug eggs or other plant problems. The Doug Green rule of thumb is to leave your garden in the fall as you would like to find it in the spring (sometimes I even follow my own rules).

Florida, as I mentioned at the start of the article was pretty good. The garden writers got to tour some gardens, hear a lot of very good speakers, and generally spend some time with other gardeners. The highlight of the whole trip was a backstage tour of Walt Disney World focussing on the horticultural aspects of the Magic Kingdom and Epcot Centre.

Interesting system. If anyone is interested in owning one of these tapes, give me a call and I will try to find out how much and how we can order one. I intend to try out the pipe trellis system next year in our own garden so I will report back on that next year at this time.

One of the problems that I am having now is that with all the interesting gardening ideas I picked up in Florida, I can hardly wait for next spring to get started. Let me leave you with the you heard it here first thought of the month. The newest and up and coming flower gardening trend is water gardening, the growing of water lilies, fountains, etc. Don't say I didn't tell you.

Don't look now but Christmas is just around the corner. I know that many of you will receive poinsettias for Christmas plant decorations, here's the information on keeping them healthy for the longest time possible. The first and most important rule is to keep them out of drafts. A cool draft will cause the leaves to drop off this tropical

plant. Second, keep it uniformly moist, letting it dry out will again cause the leaves to drop. Feel the top of the soil every day, if the soil feels dry, water; if not let it alone for another day. Jobes, the company that makes plant fertilizer has a new product that indicates the need to water a plant. If you are a rookie at watering plants, this might be a useful gadget.

I hope to write an article focussing on this trip itself and perhaps it will be printed in a later edition this spring. From a gardening point of view it was magnificent; the designing and general condition of the plants were outstanding. Seeing the nurseries, the greenhouses and construction areas was fascinating. Let me just say that I shot 9 rolls of slide film of the trip.

Jeff Ball, an American gardener/writer has put out a series of videotapes on gardening which are interesting. I have two of them and an idea which he uses on his vegetable gardening tape is well worth thinking about during the winter. He uses raised beds in his garden although the concept could be used without the beds. He puts a 1½ PVC rigid pipe every 4 feet down both sides of his raised beds. This pipe is about 18" long and he sinks it in the ground so that only 6" is showing, the pipe is left hollow so that other pipes can be inserted into it. In the spring he uses a length of 1¼" flexible plastic pipe to form hoops over his bed, ties the hoops together with string to stop them from bending over and lays plastic over the whole assembly. Instant cold frame/greenhouse. After frost, he uses 1¼ rigid pipe inserted into the ground pipes to create a fence post effect down the garden. Between these fence posts, he strings plastic netting then grows his pole beans, etc. on this trellis. In the fall, the beans, cucumbers, etc are harvested and then the cold frame goes back on to give an extended season. I get a lot of questions about keeping the poinsettia and getting it to flower again.

Well frankly it is possible in a home but unless you have a small hobby greenhouse it is not likely going to happen. The plant that you have is specially grown in a greenhouse, trimmed and pruned and in all likelihood, sprayed with growth retardants to keep it short, bushy, and very green. So it can be done but my general advice is: enjoy the plant until it loses its colour and then pitch it.

I have just started trial reading an interesting gardening newsletter that you might want to send to a serious gardener as a Christmas present. It's called "The Avant Gardener" and is available from Box 489 New York, New York, 10028 USA. A subscription is only \$12.00 US a year. It's a handy newsletter focussing on recent information and gardening tips. Another magazine which I can recommend is "Horticulture". Available from Box 51455, Boulder, Colorado 51455 USA for \$18.00/yr US. I subscribe to this magazine and it's quite interesting for the

flower growers among us. The best vegetable gardening magazine that I know of is Rodales Organic Gardening available from Rodale Press, Emmaus, PA, 18099 for \$12.97/yr. It has some very interesting material in it. Well worth the money for a gardener. For the very serious gardener, let me suggest a book which I have just added to my library, "Botanical Latin" by W.T. Stearn published by David Charles Ltd. This is available through good book stores or I understand that the Rideau Lakes Library has added a copy to their collection. It's a bit heavy and after reading it, one should be able to really understand Latin. In our business, the perennials flowers are all discussed in Latin names so it's a useful text for us. The average gardener would only use it for interest. From all of us here at Simple Gift Farm, we hope that you have a very Merry Christmas and that the real joy and spirit of Christmas is yours this holiday season and in 1987.

 DO YOU ADMIRE SOMEONE WHO PLANS HIS TAXABLE POSITION EVEN BEFORE YEAR-END?
 DO YOU PANIC WHEN THE TOPIC OF BOOKKEEPING COMES UP?
 DON'T BE ALARMED WHEN I TELL YOU THAT NOW IS THE TIME TO BE REVIEWING YOUR TAXABLE POSITION!
 DON'T WAIT TILL APRIL AND THEN "CRY THE BLUES" BECAUSE WE CAN HELP YOU!
 CALL NOW FOR A CONFIDENTIAL APPOINTMENT. WE'LL COME TO YOUR HOME, FARM OR PLACE OF BUSINESS.
 THEN RELAX, BECAUSE:
 SERVICE IS OUR BUSINESS; PEOPLE ARE OUR CONCERN.

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Merry Christmas



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