

Feline fixes Christmas eve

'Twas the night before Christmas and all through the house
Not a creature was stirring except for one mouse.
The stockings were hung by the chimney with care
And evidence proved the mouse had been there.
The children were nestled all snug in their beds,
And that's when the critter raised so much ned.
So I put on a kerchief, found a warm wrap,
And decided tonight I'd set out the traps.
When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter,
I ran to my door to see what was the matter.
When what to my wondering eyes should appear

Margaret Schmale's

Bits and Pieces



But that scurrying mouse with my cat on his rear.
That cat's not too pretty, but he's awfully darn quick
And I hoped in a moment his kill would be slick.
But more rapid than eagles the both of them came
And I whistled and shouted and called him by name:
"Here, kitty! Come on—I know you can do it.
You're a good hunter, Tommy — and now you can prove it."
To the top of the porch, to the top of the wall;
They ran this way and that — Tom was having a ball.
So up to the housetop the both of them jumped
And landed so softly I heard nary a bump.
And then in a twinkling I heard on the roof
Lots of scratching and clawing — I thought Tom had goofed.
As I came back inside and was turning around,
Down the chimney fell Tommy with a bounce and a bound.
He had dirt in his fur from his head to his foot
And his whiskers were tarnished with ashes and soot.
A large chunk of brick just missed hitting his back
And he looked like an animal that should have been sacked.
Yet his eyes they did twinkle, they gleamed with delight.
His tail twitched with joy, his feet were a sight!
His droil little mouth was drawn up like a bow,
And the hair on his chin was no longer like snow.
The lump of a mouse he held tight in his teeth,
And the dust that arose ruffled his head like a wreath.
Tom had a broad face and a little round belly
That shook when he purred like a bowl full of jelly.
He was grimy and grubby, but so proud of himself —
I laughed when I saw him in spite of myself.
With a wink of his eye and a twist of his head
He ran through the house and jumped up on my bed.
I spoke not a word, but went straight to the room —
Told Tom to get out or I'd give him the broom.
Then laying his mouse alongside of my bed,
He gave me a growl and away he sped.
He sprang to the fence, shook his fur once or twice,
And off he crept to look for more mice.
But he heard me exclaim as he stole out of sight,
"Merry Christmas, Tom cat, and thanks for tonight!"

Merry Christmas to all my readers and to the staff of The Post.



Forgotten firewood

WINTER OFFICIALLY started this week, and some households were caught unprepared with the season's wood supply still not laid in. The parable of the ant and the

grasshopper takes on new meaning to the procrastinators, when they try to cut and split logs in 35-degree weather.

Choose living gifts for Christmas

Given the proper care, houseplants make excellent Christmas gifts.

Both the gift giver and the recipient can take some simple steps to make sure the houseplant stays healthy and lasts a long time, according to Ray McNeilan, Oregon State University Extension home gardening coordinator.

Plants differ in their needs for light, water and fertilizer. Too much water will kill a jade plant, while a fern needs frequent watering. A Chinese evergreen will grow in poorly lit areas, but an African violet needs to be placed in bright light.

"If you are giving a houseplant as a Christmas gift, it is a good idea to find out the exact light, water and fertilizer requirements for the particular plant," McNeilan suggested. "Then write them down and include them as part of the gift."

If you receive a houseplant for Christmas, first make sure that it is in a pot that can drain away excess water and is in a soil mixture that supplies adequate air and water as well as anchors the plant firmly, McNeilan said.

"You may need to do some

repotting to make sure the soil mixture is correct," advised the agent.

The plant should be watered only when the soil surface feels dry. Irrigate thoroughly enough so some water runs out the bottom of the pot and can be discarded. Irrigating from the bottom is acceptable, but every third watering should be from the top to flush excess fertilizer salts out of the soil.

Place the plant in direct or indirect lighting according to its individual growing requirements. "If these are unknown, plant shops and bookstores have excellent houseplant books that can be of help," McNeilan said.

Fertilizer is necessary only when the plant is actively growing, according to the agent. Many indoor plants will grow vigorously for awhile, then go into a resting period when the fertilizer requirements are very low.

"Houseplants seldom die of starvation. More plants are killed by too much fertilizer than the other way around," said McNeilan.

Houseplants generally prefer a higher humidity than most homes supply. "You can help your new

plant adjust to the conditions in your home by misting the foliage periodically, or by setting the pot on a tray of pebbles and water," he advised. "But be careful not to let the bottom of the pot touch the water."

The leaves should be kept clean by bathing or spraying

them with lukewarm water. If the plant is too large to move, wipe each leaf clean with a soft, damp cloth.

"If you pay attention to the plant's needs for light, water, humidity, drainage and cleanliness, it should reward you with many years of pleasure," McNeilan said.

Landscape plants can make good presents

Careful selection is the key to buying landscape plants as Christmas presents, according to Ray McNeilan, Oregon State University Extension home gardening coordinator.

"First, make sure the plant fits into the landscape design scheme of the person for whom it is a gift," McNeilan said. "If it isn't suitable, the person risks your anger by not planting it, or must live for years with a shrub or tree that is irritatingly out of place."

Another important consideration McNeilan listed, especially if the plant is going to another part of the U.S., is making sure the plant will survive in the climate where it will be planted.

"Given the cold winters in North Dakota, it would be a mistake to send a rhododendron to your favorite aunt in Fargo," said McNeilan. Nursery salespeople can tell you if a plant is suited to various regions of the U.S.

Other considerations include the eventual size and shape of the plant and whether or not it needs to be planted in the sun or shade.

"Treat the landscape plant with care, McNeilan said.

"Protect it from extreme cold when transporting it from the nursery, and keep it in an outdoor area protected from wind until it is presented as a gift. It should be planted as soon as possible."

McNeilan recommended two publications to aid in selecting landscape plants. "Plant Materials for Landscaping," PNW 185, an OSU Extension publication contains a list of plants which are suitable for various parts of the Pacific Northwest.

"Landscape Tree Performance," CI 633, is published by the OSU Agricultural Experiment Station. It reports on research, conducted at the North Willamette Experiment Station in Aurora, to determine ornamental tree growth performance within a short period following planting.

"This study helps to identify some of the trees that will quickly produce the shade and beauty which make the house and yard a pleasant place to live," said McNeilan.

Both publications are available free from the Bulletin Mailing Service, Industrial Building, OSU, Corvallis 97331.

Some turkey products don't resemble bird

Holidays and special occasions need not be the only time to serve turkey according to a nutrition educator for Clackamas County extension service.

"The versatility of turkey has produced a whole new line of products that are nutritious as well as economical," said Lynn Murphy. "Turkey ham" and

'sausage' are excellent alternatives to traditional dishes, and sandwiches made from turkey pastrami would be a welcome change of pace at lunch time."

The new products make turkey available in smaller consumer sizes, Murphy pointed out. "A whole turkey is not always a realistic choice for a small family or group," she said.

Agent tells how to select, care for poinsettias

Poinsettias, the traditional Christmas flowers, are available in a variety of colors, shapes and sizes.

"You can buy tall poinsettias for display in large tubs, low ones for a table centerpiece, or any size in between that fits your decorating scheme," said Ray McNeilan, Oregon State University Extension home gardening coordinator.

When selecting a poinsettia, McNeilan recommends looking carefully at the foliage. Green foliage all the way to the soil line indicates a disease-free plant with active root.

Also check the flower, which is a small green button

in the middle of the red bract. If the flower is tight and green rather than expanded and yellow, the plant will last longer.

"Yellow buttons and open flowers mean the plant is in a later stage of development and may not last as long," says McNeilan.

Poinsettias are accustomed to warm, humid and airy greenhouse conditions. On the trip home from the nursery, the plant should be wrapped in paper to protect it from cold temperatures. Once home, submerge the entire pot in water until air bubbles stop rising. Then water again only when the surface of the soil feels dry.

The best room temperature for poinsettias is 65 to 70 degrees F by day, 55 to 60 degrees F at night. They should be given sunlight, if possible, but don't let the leaves touch the windowpane or they will shrivel and drop, McNeilan warned.

After the poinsettia has been in the house for three weeks or so, soluble fertilizer can be added to the water.

Use one-fourth the dilution required for houseplants. Repeat the fertilizer application every three or four weeks, as needed, to keep the plant actively growing.

Poinsettias can be kept through the year with special attention made to bloom again. They can be kept as houseplants until the danger of frost has passed and then put outside for the summer.

Snacks don't have to be junk food

Christmas parties during the school day for young children can be fun as well as nutritious, according to Lynn Murphy, Nutrition Educator, Clackamas County Extension Service. Instead of the usual line-up of cookies, cake and candy, consider treating the youngsters to frozen yogurt or pudding made with fresh milk.

Dairy products such as milk, cheese and yogurt are excellent sources of calcium, protein, vitamin A and phosphorus, nutrients essential to each person's diet.

Yogurt can be frozen by adding some milk to thin the

consistency and pouring into an attractive mold for freezing. Cheese and apple slices and cottage cheese dip served with carrot and celery sticks are also excellent snacks for young children.

"Keep good nutrition in mind when planning parties for young people," Murphy said. "Cheese, yogurt, ice cream and cottage cheese can all be attractive, nutritious party foods."

A bulletin entitled, "Super Snacks That Count," is available through the Clackamas County Extension Office, by telephoning 655-8634.

Whats cooking?

Snacks featured for entertaining

COTTAGE CHEESE DIP

1 cup cottage cheese
1/2 package dry onion soup mix
Milk

Mash or sieve cottage cheese until fairly smooth. Add soup mix and blend well. Add enough milk to thin the mix to dipping consistency, mix well and chill.

—recipes from Lynn Murphy, nutrition educator for Clackamas County extension service.

MINTS

5 tablespoons margarine
1 pound box (4 cups) powdered sugar (unsifted)
4 drops food coloring, red or green depending on color desired

1 teaspoon spearmint or peppermint flavoring
2 tablespoons hot water
Melt butter in saucepan, add food coloring and flavoring. Remove from heat. Stir in powdered sugar and add hot water. Roll out on wax paper. Roll in small circles. Put on wax paper. Press with fork for design. Let dry for 2 hours. Store in air tight container in a cool place.

CRAB DIP

18-oz. package cream cheese (softened)
1/4 cup catsup
1 cup clams, drained. Reserve some of clam juice.
1 cup crab
2 teaspoons vinegar
Mayonnaise (enough to produce the consistency you prefer)

Mix thoroughly. You may moisten the mixture with clam juice. Serve with dips or crackers. Serves 6-8.

—From the files of Mrs. Clark (Ruth) Lund Sandy, Oregon

Contributed by Sara Sewell

CHEESE BALL

1 cube margarine
3 jars Kraft processed cheese spread (two cheddar and one garlic)
generous dash Worcestershire sauce
scant dash tabasco sauce

Cream all ingredients together with electric mixer and let chill. Form into ball and roll in a package of dry taco seasoning mix or in chopped nuts. Serve on small platter with crackers; garnish with parsley.

From the files of Cheryl Barton Port Angeles, Wash.

Lighting tips offered

Short winter days mean more money must be spent for artificial lighting, but there are ways to cut down on the cost without sacrificing one's eyesight, according to Carolyn Studer, Clackamas County Extension Agent.

A new bulletin called "More Light For Your Money" is available free of charge from the county extension office. The author of the bulletin, Dorothy F. Brown, Oregon State University Extension housing-home furnishings specialist reported that the way to achieve savings is to get more lumens per watt of electricity.

"Lumen" is simply a measurement for the amount of light given off by any lamp.

Incandescent light bulbs vary in the lumens they give off. The package provides the lumen count, so the wise shopper will pay attention to this count when comparing light bulbs. "Long life" bulbs have fewer lumens per watt because they last longer. The consumer must decide

whether long life or more light is most important when buying incandescent bulbs.

The colors of walls, floors, ceiling and furniture can make quite a difference in the quantity of light that is available. Colors that are half-way between almost-white and almost-black will absorb more than half the light that strikes them.

"Thus, it takes more watts to adequately light a room decorated in medium to dark colors," said Mrs. Brown. Fluorescent lighting provides three to four times more lumens per watt than incandescent bulbs. "People who do not like fluorescent lighting because of their color rendition should consider using either deluxe warm white or deluxe cool white tubes," Mrs. Brown said. The deluxe color tubes make both people and room colors look attractive. They are available at electric shops.

Fluorescent tubes not only provide many more lumens per watt, they also have very long life, according to the author.

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