

Along Azalea Row

By RUTH B. SMITH

Santa Monica, California citizens are trying a new plan this year — to "de-commercialize" Christmas. Not that they would, necessarily, discourage people in the spirit of giving nor the merchants from supplying the essential merchandise, but there is a definite effort to turn thought in the direction of the spiritual significance of Christmas.

The usual Santa Claus parade has been abandoned and instead of the shop windows filled with toys and tinsel — bait for the holiday shopper, various store windows will feature the Nativity and other Biblical scenes. In addition, at Christmas there will be a parade of similar floats and "singing choirs," the procession to lead the way to a playhouse where "The Nativity Story" will be presented.

Each of us has a very deep love for the religious aspect of Christmas but many are hesitant in expressing their feelings in this modern age. Congratulations to a whole city with that courage are truly merited.

Each year the Garden Clubbers look forward to their December meeting with great anticipation. December 10 is set for the Christmas Tea, with the business session convening at two. Horticultural and floral aspects of the meeting will acquire a festive touch and we shall have something of the spiritual meaning of Christmas both in song and story.

The usual Christmas exchange of gifts offers a new angle or two this time. First, the gifts you bring must be home-made "goodies;" anything in Christmas candies, cookies, fruit cake or jellies will be acceptable indeed. Then, for the most ingeniously or beautifully wrapped packages, there will be prizes — or surprises! Should you bring a guest, be sure there's a package for her. Better still, bring along an extra one just in case someone else may forget hers.

"A word to the wise. . .," since this is a garden column: Chrysanthemums that have already bloomed out can be cut back to the ground. If you can secure perennials in large clumps, which represent established plants, do get them in now and you will be way ahead of the seedlings. This would apply to delphiniums, gailardia, coreopsis, columbine and others—but protect the plantings from the winter cold. A suggestion comes for strawberry plantings: to insure good drainage, a must for the best in strawberries, plant them in raised beds, on the edge of banks or in strawberry barrels. If the runners are kept pinched off, they should produce the first year.

With Christmas planning everywhere, and the magazines full of "goodies" to tempt the eye and appetite, we shall need no other reminders for the tenth. And since our winter storms are upon us, there is time for indoor activity now. Here is a thought to encourage the gardener all through the month.

I heard a bird sing in the dark of December
A magical thing and sweet to remember

"We are nearer to Spring than we were in September!"

I heard a bird sing in the dark of December.

O. Herford.

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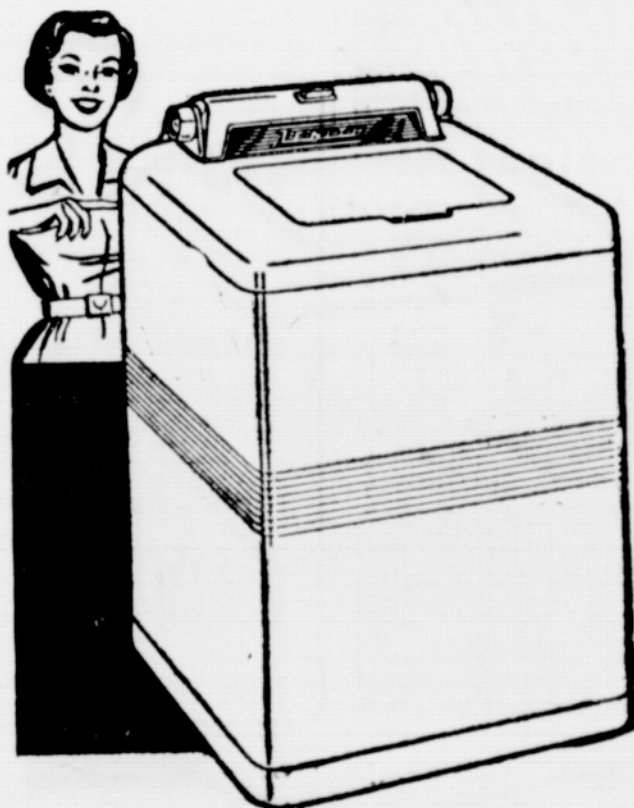
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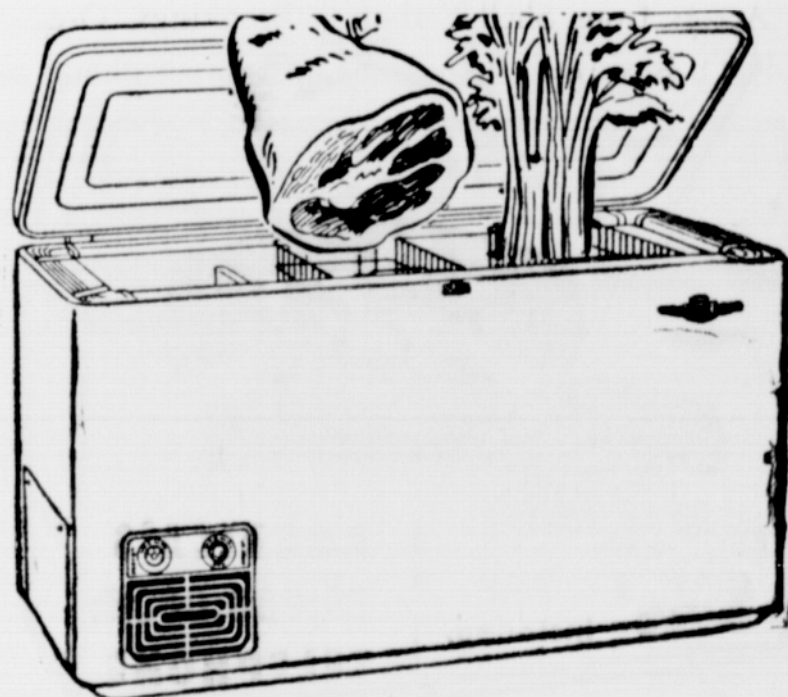
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