

Potted Plants for Living Room

MANY lovers of flowers who have not the time to bother with an indoor window-box, enjoy keeping a number of potted plants in the living room during the Winter. Some, in fact, have turned a bay window into a small conservatory or Winter garden merely by an attractive arrangement of plants in separate pots.

When a window-box is filled, the plants must be of the same general character to be successful, but if one's Winter garden is made up of plants in separate pots a greater variety may be kept, as each plant may receive different treatment in the matter of light, watering, soil, etc., and palms, rubber plants, and caeti, which call for special handling, may be added.

Begonias, ivy, smilax, and aspidistra, all good plants for indoor culture, demand more or less the same treatment, as was explained in a previous article sent out by the United States Department of Agriculture, describing the indoor window-box.

Making Potting Soil.

Those who do not have gardens would do better to get potting soil of the nearest florist for their potted plants. Good potting soil may be prepared at home but it usually takes considerable care and forethought. Those willing to take the trouble may prepare it by using one part compost, one part good loam and one part sand.

The compost should be cow manure and good turf rotted together for a year and turned two or three times in the interim. Well decomposed leaf mould would answer as a partial substitute for the compost. One-twentieth part bone meal is a good addition to the mixture. If the loam is very heavy, containing much clay, its proportion should be somewhat diminished. If the loam is light and sandy, reduce the amount of sand, or in some localities omit it altogether.

Examine Occasionally.

Potted plants should be examined occasionally to see whether or not the plant requires repotting. This is done by holding the hands over the top of the pot, inverting plant and all, tapping the edge of the pot so as to loosen it, then lifting the pot off. This cannot be done unless the soil is moderately moist. If the ball of earth is completely covered with roots, the plant should be put in a slightly larger pot with new potting soil "firmed" about the old ball of earth by "firming" with the fingers. Then wet thoroughly.

A housewife who desires a few potted plants but does not possess the regulation flower pots, may prepare tin cans that will be quite satisfactory. A small hole should be made in the bottom of the can and a piece of broken crockery or a few stones put in the bottom of the can before the earth is added, in order to give the proper drainage. The stones or crockery should be also used in the regular flower pot.

Hanging baskets may be used advantageously to make an indoor Winter garden attractive. They should be hung near a light window.

Geraniums.

If geraniums are potted so that the root growth is restricted, and if they are kept fairly dry, they may be forced to bloom during the Winter. Geraniums are attractive in the ordinary window-box because of their foliage alone. They should not be placed in a window-box with the expectation that they will bear flowers.

Ferns.

Ferns as they come from the florists prepared for indoor culture should be placed in a strong light, though they grow well without sunlight. They should be watered sparingly but should be kept moist at all times. Improper watering, especially keeping the plant soaked or permitting it to get dry, is the foundation of most fern difficulties. It is especially difficult not to over-water when the fern is in a jardiniere, where drainage is necessarily poor.

In Spring and Summer they will require three times the water necessary in Fall and Winter.

Give Baths.

It is well occasionally to put them in the bathtub and give them a bath with weak soapsuds made from a good grade of soap. The soap must be thoroughly rinsed off immediately. Great care must be exercised not to injure the fronds as they are very tender.

Mealy bug is one of the worst enemies in house culture. This is a white woolly insect that works close to the bottom of the fronds. If found, the plant should be examined every day and all insects removed by a splint or toothpick. If the pest is very bad, cut off all the top of the fern within an inch of the ground, treat thoroughly each day till all insects are exterminated when a new top can be grown.

Red spider is a minute sucking insect that thrives in a dry atmosphere. It can be kept in check by spraying the top with clear water. In living rooms this is frequently impracticable. The next best thing is repeated baths. The aphid or green fly is also eradicated by washing.

Ferns should be fed once in two to four weeks in the place of ordinary watering with dilute nitrate of soda (a heaping teaspoonful to a quart of water) ammonia water (a teaspoonful of ammonia to a quart) or manure leachings. Prepared plant food or a little sprinkling of ground bone and wood ashes also gives satisfaction.

Will Exhibit Rare Bulbs and Shrubs

FROM England and Holland on November 24, at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition grounds, 123 tons of rare blossoming shrubs and bulbs arrived, to be used in the landscape gardening effects in the courts of the exposition.

These included nine large crates of rare Himalayan rhododendrons from London, and 144 crates of bulbs from Holland. A large consignment from Honolulu arrived on the grounds the same day, to be used in embellishing the gardens around the Hawaiian building, now nearing completion, just north of the Fine Arts lagoon.

In the Palace of Horticulture, under the great dome, the eleven carloads of tropical plants, fruit trees and royal palms have been given permanent place.

These are of sorts never before removed from the jungles of Cuba, and despite the difficulties in the way of preparing the huge trees for shipment, Superintendent McKenzie, who was sent to Cuba to assemble the huge display, was able to land them at the exposition without the loss of a single specimen, by frost or otherwise.

A Cheap Filter.

The most impure water may be purified by filtering through charcoal. Take a large flower pot, put a piece of sponge or clean moss over the hole in the bottom and fill three-quarters full of equal parts of clean sand and charcoal. Over this lay a linen cloth large enough to hang over the sides of the pot. Pour the water into the cloth and it will come out pure.



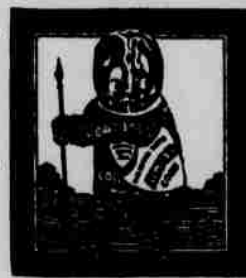
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