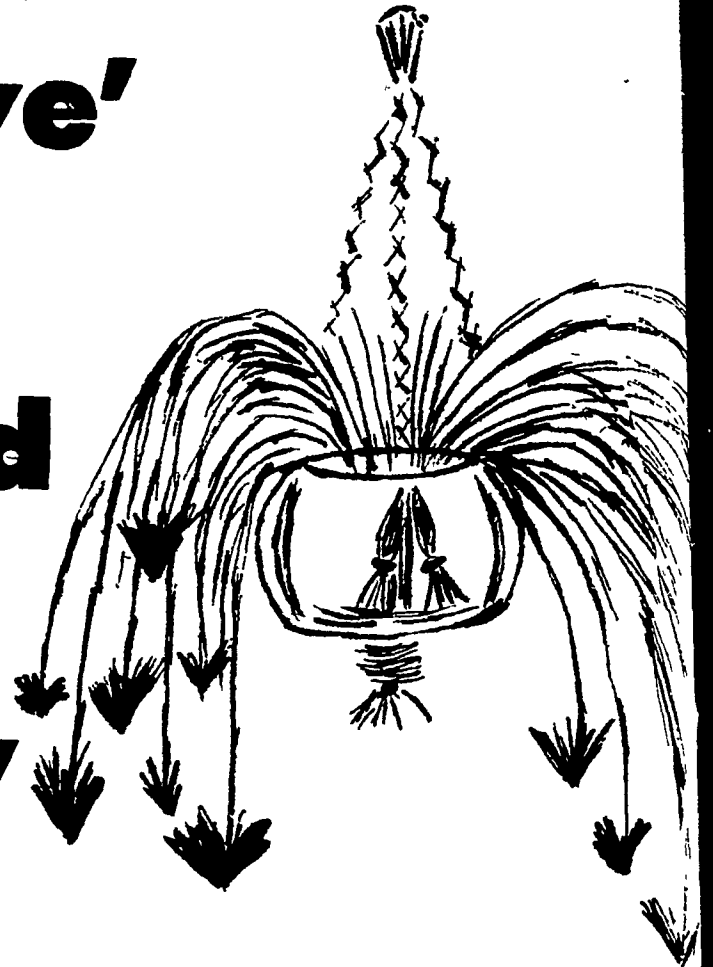
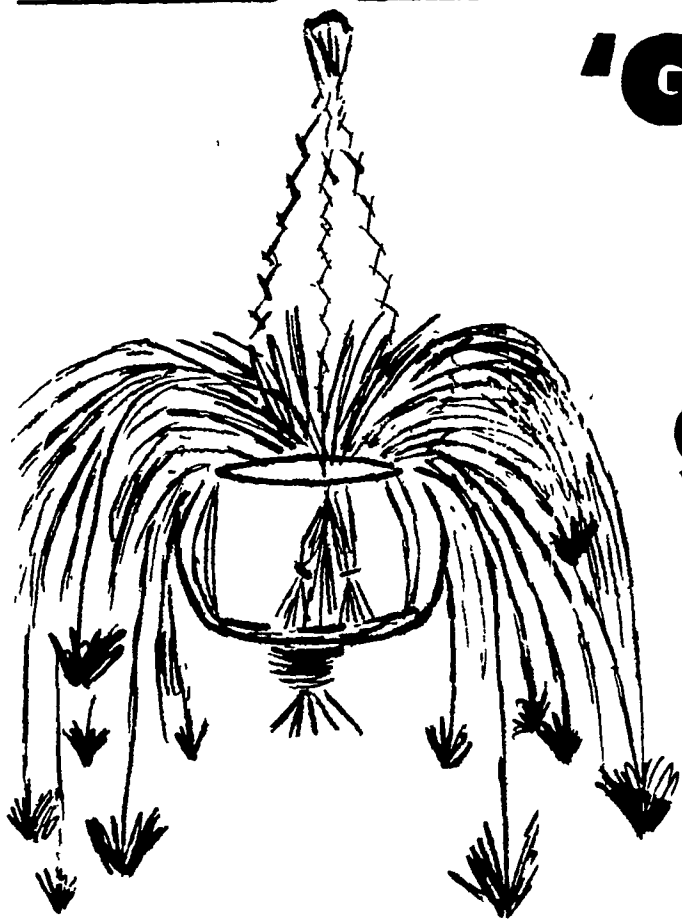


'Green Glove' taught greenhand about greenery



By SALLY BAIR
Feature Writer

Seventeen-year-old Jim Wert is no stranger to hard work. Jim operates a greenhouse and attends school fulltime. And, from all appearances, he's doing an enviable job of both.

Jim's greenhouse, filled with lush greenery, is located in Landisville just a few blocks from his 289 Main Street home. He has named it "The Green Glove Greenhouse" after a chance remark made by his grandmother in reference to his having won the FFA Star Greenhand Award last year.

The greenhouse once belonged to Mark Nolt, and is now part of the property owned by the Dan Gross family. Jim says the Gross family has been a big source of help and encouragement in his work there. Jim's parents are Mr. and Mrs. James Wert, Sr.

What inspires a teenager to go into the greenhouse business? Jim says simply, "I've always been interested in it. My grandfather was interested, and so was my Dad. I've helped take care of the flower garden at my home since I was in third or fourth grade."

He recounts, too, how he bid on all the plants offered for sale at a public auction. He got them all, and he was just in seventh grade. He still has some of those plants in his greenhouse.

This Hempfield High School senior, not only has the interest, but also seems to have what must be the most important ingredient in growing plants - a green thumb. Along with the green thumb, Jim is also willing to work hard. He spends at least one hour at the greenhouse watering plants before school each morning. He adds, "I work here every day. There is always something to do." In the summer he grew over an acre of vegetables, and said, "That was a lot of weeding."

Despite the hundreds of healthy plants in the greenhouse, Jim is quick to point out that it has been a learning process. He is in his second year of floriculture at Mount Joy Vocational Technical School, and says, "I wouldn't have tried it without having a course at Vo-Tech."

Last Summer he decided to take over the abandoned greenhouse, and in August he began the venture with 50 poinsettias. "I bought cuttings," he said, explaining that poinsettias are very difficult to start alone. In October he purchased 875 more cuttings, and he was in business in earnest. Most of this crop were sold to churches and to group functions over the Christmas holiday.

While working with the poinsettias, Jim started hanging baskets from cuttings of plants he had in his room at home. He added, "I was also digging wax begonias before the frost. I'm not afraid to ask people for cuttings or plants if they're just going to let them freeze over the winter."

He now has over 400 hanging baskets, and is starting 300 hanging geraniums of pink and lavender and 325 standard geraniums in red, pink and white. He said, "I want to have a big variety to see what I can grow and to see how they sell."

His big greenhouse crops now are chrysanthemums and Easter lilies which he is scheduling to be in bloom for the Easter holiday. He has seven colors of fuchsia, and quite a few daffodils and tulips which are beginning to bloom. He said he is concerned about selling the blooming plants because their life is so short and if he doesn't sell them, they are a total loss. He is considering getting a refrigerator into working order which would stretch the life of blooming plants by several weeks.

African violets are another large "crop" for Jim, and

he explains that he roots leaves, and plants his violets in African violet potting soil.

Jim does his marketing through two outlets - Root's Auction in Manheim and Southern Market in Lancaster. He has had a stand at Root's since last May, but sold mostly vegetables over the summer. He has been at Southern Market just four weeks, but he said he notices a difference in the customers who visit each market. The ones at Southern market are more verbal, he says, often exclaiming, "It's beautiful." Jim says he feels they're a little friendlier.

At both stands he sells hanging baskets, some macrame holders and foliage plants. He said he likes standing at the markets because, "I enjoy meeting a lot of people." And at Southern Market he said, "I can already see people coming back." Business has been slow at both markets, but he said, "It's picking up now that it's warmer."

When traffic is slow at the markets, Jim said he does homework, or studies seed catalogues and makes macrame holders. Sheila Gross assists him at both markets, helping him get ready for Southern Market at 7:30 a.m. every Saturday morning.

Transporting his plants to market in this cold weather is not too much of a problem, Jim said. He heats up his station wagon and quickly loads it. He said he must handle plants carefully, but if any leaves are broken off in transporting, he just brings them home and roots them.

Weathering his first winter in the greenhouse business has been a challenge for Jim. Healthy plants need some warmth so he uses large amounts of fuel oil. Thermostat temperatures are usually set between 60 and 65 degrees,

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The way to have full, thick hanging baskets, Jim says, is to pinch back the plants to force them to send out extra shoots.