

Ag official says extension must focus on new areas

SULPHUR SPRINGS, W Va. — "Extension family education programs can, and must, take the lead in teaching skills people need to promote individual growth and development and to meet needs for food, fuel and housing," Anson R. Bertrand, director of science and education for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, said Wednesday.

Bertrand spoke to members of the National Association of Extension Home Economists at their annual meeting here this morning.

"Today, extension must

focus its attention on meeting new social and economic demands facing people who live in both rural and urban areas. Extension must provide a broad scope of educational assistance to help them identify needs, make decisions and utilize resources to improve their quality of living," he said.

Now, more than ever, USDA's Science and Education Administration research and education programs must work together to find answers to serious questions involving energy, nutrition, family resource management,

human development, housing, taxes, food, fiber and health and to deliver those answers to the people we serve," said Bertrand.

Extension - a partnership of federal, state and local governments - provides "a rich base of knowledge for every county," he said.

County home economists need to be involved in public policy formation, said Bertrand. "In coming years your input on a number of tough issues facing the family will be needed to

develop sound public policy," he said.

These areas, he said, include the nature and dimensions of personal space and the kind and quality of community services; the need for conserving resource supplies and protecting environmental quality and the means of doing so; and information resources that make sure sources of information are sound and credible.

Bertrand said scientific research findings must be transferred to the public if we are to improve the quality of life.

"An essential role of extension home economists is to provide the link between the family and the research, both in interpreting research findings to the family and conveying problems needing research to the scientific community," he said.

The fact that people can be reached directly in their homes and involved through leadership roles in the extension system is not only important to extension's success, but also the envy of many agencies and groups who wish to use extension's

delivery system to reach consumers, Bertrand said.

"In home economics and nutrition, a Gallup Poll showed 17 million persons — about 10 percent of the U.S. adult population — have participated actively at least once in some aspect of these extension home economics programs," he said.

"I am confident that as extension home economics proceeds on a course of providing new programs, developing new and innovative evaluation systems, and responding to the public policy issues confronting families, that its 66-year history of success will not be broken or diminished," Bertrand said.

Grow cactus for fun



Cactus is a treat gardeners of all ages can grow indoors that's fun, foolproof and carefree. These are a sample of Burpee Seed's cactus selection.

DOYLESTOWN — What can gardeners of all ages grow indoors that's fun, foolproof and carefree? "Cactus", says Jeannette Lowe, Burpee Seed Company horticulturist and indoor gardener. "We've had a pot of cactus growing on our office window sill in bright sunshine over a radiator for several years and these plants are certainly thriving on neglect."

Once cactus seedlings are up and growing, you can forget about them. These desert denizens like dry air and heat from radiators or vents. This arid atmosphere, prevalent in most homes during winter when furnaces are running, is difficult for many other types of houseplants but ideal for cactus.

Summer heat suits them too. They are native to desert areas with very little rainfall any time of the year. This means you can forget about watering cactus for a month or more at a time...no "plant sitting" problems during vacations or trips.

A mixture of cactus varieties is fun to grow. You then have the surprise of seeding many different types develop. Will they be barrel-like, columnar, branched or some other shape?

If you prefer individual varieties, there are exotics such as Saguaro, Organ Pipe and Native's Comb...to mention a few. All develop slowly into miniatures of their desert counterparts and all are spiny. Be careful to keep your distance from the sharp thorns or wear protective gloves when you are handling the plants.

HOW TO GROW

Plant cactus seeds indoors at any time of the year. Sow them evenly and thinly in pots or flats filled with planting formula, potting soil or a porous mixture such as one part sieved soil to one part sand. Cover the seeds lightly with the planting material and keep it slightly moist. Plants emerge in about 14 to 28 days. During this germination (seed-sprouting) period, even moisture is necessary for good results.

When the cactus seedlings show their first spines, it's time to transplant them to individual pots, or perhaps you would like to group several different types in larger containers. Be sure there is good drainage from the bottom...either a hole, or a layer of gravel, stone or broken pieces of crock about an inch deep. Also use a soil mixture that drains fast. One part planting formula or sieved soil to one part sand or gravel works well and will make your cactus feel at home, as if in the desert.

Water the transplanted seedlings to settle them in, then wait 2 weeks or longer before you water again. Grow your cactus in plenty of light. A sunny windowsill, a spot under plant lights, or a place in a greenhouse with a fairly dry atmosphere all are fine. If you live in frost-free areas, you also can grow cactus in an outdoor garden. They're ideal for arid conditions in the southwestern United States.

Go away for a month and forget about your cactus. They'll still be thriving when you return. Give them a good watering, but pour off any excess in the receptacles below the pots or containers.

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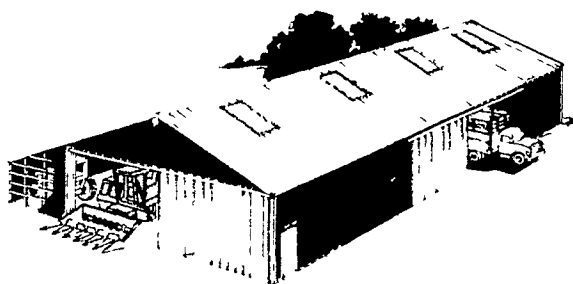
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