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Weeding
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more**

For the avid gardener

Force Bulbs to Bloom

If you were lucky enough to get bulbs for the holidays or have found some in garden shops, start them now to chase away the winter gloom. Paperwhite narcissus, amaryllis and hyacinths are good candidates, says C.R. Bryan, Jr., Delaware County Extension agent. Paperwhite narcissus or its yellow versions, Grand Soleil d'Or and Chinese Sacred lily, grow well in water and pea gravel or gravel chips. Place bulbs in containers so they are not touching each other because they swell considerably during growth. A 4 in. pot will hold one, six-inch pot can hold about three and a seven-inch pot can hold five or six. Place bulbs so their necks stick out about 1/2 inch above gravel surface. Fill with water to just below the gravel and set container in a cool location. For best growth, put pots in the dark where temperatures range from 40 F to 55 F for two weeks or until you have two or four inches of top growth and a vigorous bed of roots. (Don't worry if bulbs are pushed out a bit.) Then bring into the light and warmer tem-

peratures. After a day or two move to a cool sunny location. For faster blooming, put pots in a well lighted location at 60 F. from the start but don't expect blossoms to last as long. If you are really impatient, put pots at even higher temperatures — 60 F to 70 F in the sun but expect weak growth and poor flowering. Hyacinths force well in water if grown in a special glass or cup which separates the body of the bulb from the water. Place bulb in the collar or rim portion and fill with water to 1/4 inch from the bulb bottom. Be sure no water touches the bulb as the roots will grow down into the water. Put it in a cool dark place, adding water was necessary until the lower section is filled with roots. When the bud is about 4 in. high, bring it into the light but keep it cool. Amaryllis bulbs can also be brought into bloom now. Many are sold potted and need only water and a sunny cool location to bring them into flower in about 6-8 weeks.

4-H Poultry Team Begins

LEBANON — Lebanon Co. 4-H members were introduced to Poultry Judging recently by Herb Jordan, Penn State Extension poultry specialist. Twelve 4-H'ers got hands-on experience at candling and grading eggs as well as "reading" a live bird. Reading a bird includes determining its life and egg-laying stage by looking at combs and wattles, wing feathers, pigment in legs and beak vents, and pubic bones. According to Linda Siegel, Lebanon Co. 4-H agent, 4-H poultry judging teaches 4-H'ers how to look for quality in live poultry and eggs, how to make decisions, and poultry

science. Judging training meetings will continue throughout the year, led by 4-H leader Ben Maurer. Each August, four Lebanon County 4-H'ers go to State 4-H Achievement Days at Penn State to compete in the state poultry judging contest. The winning state team goes on to national competition in Louisville, Ky. Poultry judging is open to anyone, ages 8-19, who is interested in learning about poultry production and judging. People who are not currently 4-H members can join the 4-H Poultry Club or any 4-H club with poultry projects. Call Linda Siegel, 274-2801, for more information.

Clever Clovers

Members of the Clever Clovers 4-H Club met at the Joseph home in Sergeantsville during January. Mrs. Nethery, a club leader, discussed presentations with the group. Two slide shows were presented: How to Give a

Demonstration and How To Give a Good Speech. The group make Macrame hearts at their January Arts & Crafts meeting. They will hold their next meeting at Delaware Township School on Feb. 15.

Mammals Discovered

(Continued from Page B10)

behavior at Cornell. "Their social behavior is one of the mammal finds of the century," comments Richard D. Alexander, a University of Michigan biology professor. **Underground Group Living** Unlike most mole rats, which live alone or in small family groups, naked mole rats congregate in large underground colonies with an extensive tunnel system and a large central nesting area. Found mostly in Kenya, Ethiopia, and Somalia, they

subsist on large tubers that grow deep in the ground there. **Chain of Diggers** As with termites, a worker caste composed of both sexes keeps the tunnels clear of obstructions, forages for food, and provisions the nesting area. All the breeding in a colony is typically done by a queen and one or two dominant male consorts, although the worker caste is not sterile. "It's most unusual," says Alexander. "Naked mole rats are the only mammals with a caste that surrenders its breeding rights without constant friction or fighting." Similar to certain bees and wasps, the queen — usually the largest female in the nest — rules this closed society by constantly

asserting her dominance. Observes Sherman, "She simply doesn't lie around being groomed all day, but is often on the move. When encountering workers, she sometimes bumps or touches them, and in the narrow confines of a tunnel, she steps over her subjects or they usually move below her." In the lab at Cornell, litters produced by queens have averaged about 10 pups. Fully grown, the smallest mole rats weigh about half an ounce, the largest two ounces. They measure roughly three to five inches from snout to tail tip. Despite their small size, they're long-lived rodents. Scientists are still studying some in South Africa that she collected in Kenya 10 years ago. Digging and earth moving are favorite naked mole rat activities. Burrowing through the ground, the rodent chisels with its oversize front teeth and packs the walls of its tunnel by pushing with its snout. **Kicker Clears Entrance** Tunneling is a two-tiered effort. The mole rat as the front of the digging chain roots out a pile of dirt and moves it between its legs backward toward the tunnel opening to a fellow worker, who kicks it out. Then the animal moves back to the front for more digging by crawling gingerly over other workers, who are moving slowly backward with their loads of dirt. "It's like a Caterpillar tractor tread of moving mole rats, pushing inexorably forward," says Sherman. But beneath this normally friendly, cooperative society lies a competitive demon, often unleashed when the queen disappears. "Absolute mayhem sometimes ensues when a queen is taken out of a colony," says Sherman. "Animals attack each other. There is a tremendous competition to be part of the power structure, and it's all expressed when the breeder disappears. Things don't settle down until another female becomes dominant and starts breeding." Then peace comes, and the naked mole rat reverts to its industrious insect-like behavior.



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