

Parlez-vous plantais? Some say ouid, some node

By KEITH BARNES
Collegian Staff Writer

Talk is cheap, and some say that talk directed at plants leads the league in cheapness. Contrary to popular belief, plants aren't like people — they don't talk back. There may be safety in silence, but not even a dumb cane (*Dieffenbachia*) should have to put up with all the less than cool air tossed in its direction.

Green Thumbs

According to reliable opinions, however, people who speak their minds in the plant room probably do have healthier green growth than those who stifle themselves. There's an outside chance that this is because the more loquacious lend a little extra carbon dioxide (the gas that greens get off on) to the plant's immediate atmosphere. A more likely ex-

planation is that the garrulous grower tends to pay more attention to a plant's basic needs and the tender words, although of little value, do no harm.

Putting aside the casual types such as Mary Hartman's mother (her words are hardly tender) and the ones who try to verbally charm their snake plants, those who religiously speak to (and for) their green youngsters should be considered. The Rev. Franklin Loehr followed up some extensive interviewing (of people) with "The Power of Prayer in Plants," a book which declares that "two out of three prayed-for plants come out ahead."

When rhetoric isn't flooding the plant chambers, music is apt to be. Rare is the individual who will say that music isn't good for most anything, including plants. But imagine the poor philodendron recently subjected to 11 solid hours of Bachman-Turner Overdrive (BLT). The demented student who spun the discs insists that his plant suffered no ill effects,

but the jury is still out on whether Phil has been launched into a state of permanent dormancy. Incidentally, b-b-baby, the 11 hours of BLT did claim a roommate, the late Dogwood Bumstead (12th-Strictly Business).

Some explain that it's the quality of the sound and not the type of music that matters. Jerry Baker (author of "Plants Are Like People") places plants on top of his stereo and says, "no question about it, plants respond to the vibrations in the bass speakers." Baker does other strange things to plants (like soaping his lawn), but still sells a lot of books.

Recognizing a good thing when he hears it, George Milstein has capitalized on the various theories by recording "Music to Grow Plants By," available from Environmental Sounds. At least one reviewer has described the tunes therein as "nothing more than a sonic hum." At least one gardening columnist feels that the record is nothing more than a sonic rip-off that any pet frock fancier should be proud to own.

Anyway, a professor of botany at the University of Vermont, Richard Klein, went berserk a few years back and played recordings of Gregorian chants, Mozart, Dave Brubeck, Beatles and striptease music to several groups of dwarf marigolds twice a day. At the end of one month, he measured the plants for size, weight and number of flowers. In a report that surprised no one, Klein concluded that, "there was absolutely no difference."

The final words (it is hoped hopefully) on plant communication come from this until now unpublished report by a local plant expert. His conclusive evidence suggests that what plants really like best (next to light, heat, water, fertilizer and no kittens) are: country music lyrics, New Yorker cartoons, professional wrestling, puns, soap operas, Jerzy Kosinski and (gawrsh) love. Like people, plants have their prejudices, too — it's only appropriate in this, the Bicentennial year. And that, loyal fans, just about thumbs it up.

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UNIVERSITY CALENDAR

Wednesday, May 12, 1976

SPECIAL EVENTS

Sports: Men's baseball, vs. Indiana, Pa., 1:30 p.m.
University Theatre, "Jazz Dance Theatre in Concert," 8 p.m., Playhouse Theatre.
Dr. Franklin Littell, religious studies, Temple University, on "Christianity and the Holocaust in the Age of Genocide," 8 p.m., HUB assembly room.
Composers' Concert, 8:30 p.m., Music Bldg. recital hall.

SEMINAR

Fuel Science, 4 p.m., Room 301 Mineral Industries. Dr. Alan Davis, geology, on "Occurrence of Pyrite in Coals."

MEETINGS

NSCAR, 8 p.m., Room 60 Willard. Alfredo Lopez, USA chief of PSP, on "Puerto Rican Liberation and Struggles in USA."
PSU Sports Car Club, 7:30 p.m., Room 367 Willard.
Nittany Grotto, 7:30 p.m., Room 217 Willard.
National Student Coalition against Racism, 8 p.m., Room 320 HUB.

EXHIBITS

Museum of Art: Portraits USA: 1776-1976.
Zoller Gallery: MFA show by Brigitte Henry and William Diaz, painters, and Fred Snitzer, sculptor.
HUB Gallery: Retrospective exhibit of work by French architect Auguste Perret.
HUB Main Lounge: Suiting Everyone (Smithsonian Traveling Exhibition Service).
Kern Gallery: Bruce Johnson, Watercolors. 1st Annual Graduate Commons Sculpture Invitational.
Chambers Gallery: Undergraduate Student Exhibition, all media.
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Lending Services Lobby - Drawings by Neil Feather.

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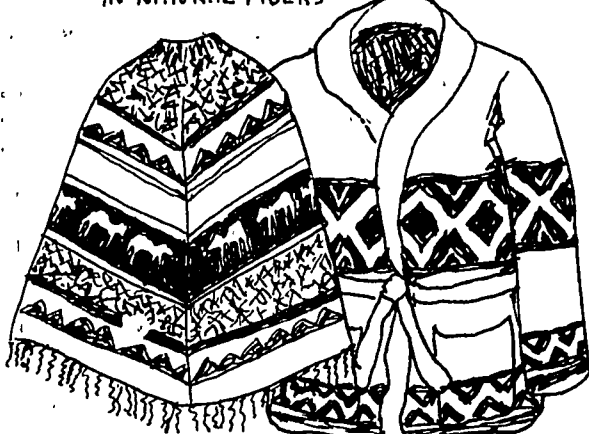
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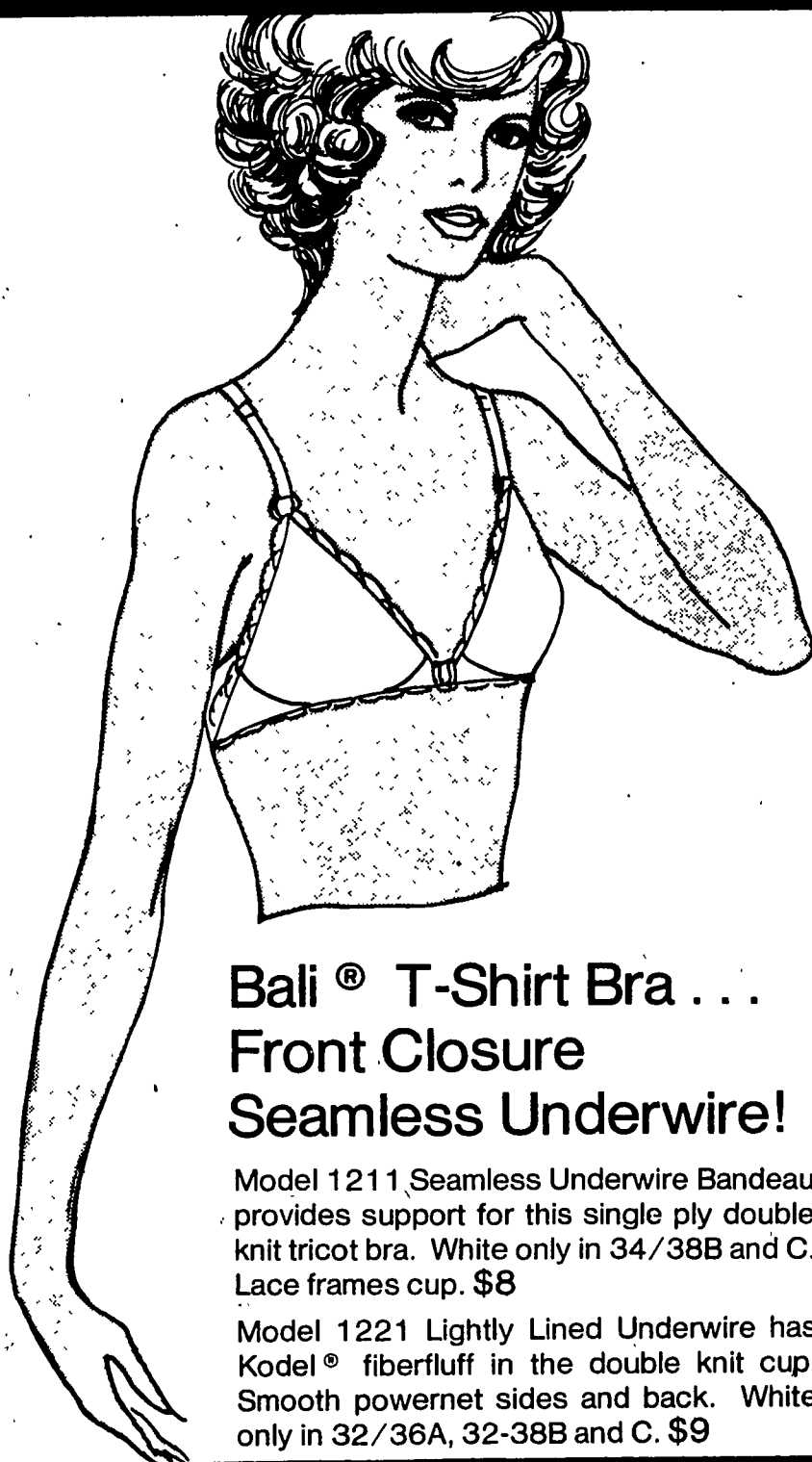
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