

Over The Back Fence

by Max Smith



The interest in home vegetable gardening is running higher this spring and we are aware of many new families trying their skills at growing some of their own vegetables. We encourage this type of home activity and feel that it will be very educational for the parents as well as the youngsters. However, there are several things to keep in mind in growing home vegetables and flowers.

First, fertilizer is helpful when used in the proper place at the correct amount. Any fertilizer containing either nitrogen or potash will burn seeds and plant roots when in direct contact. The fertilizer should be placed away from the seeds or plants, or mixed with the soil before planting. The second thing is that weed killers are not for home gardening; they are very likely to do far more harm than good in

inexperienced hands. Hand cultivation is still best for the home gardener.

With warmer weather due to arrive at any time, many property owners will be outside getting the garden and lawn in summer-time condition. A good raking might be one place to start before any lime or fertilizer is applied; this will remove trash and old grass from last year. Lime should be applied when needed according to a complete soil test, followed by moderate fertilizer applications. In many cases the weed killers can be applied with the fertilizer thus saving a separate spraying operation. Mowing can be started when grass growth gives anything to mow; some areas of rank growth may need mowing before the entire area.

Higher farm income in 1973 resulted in considerable increase in the purchase of major farm machinery. If these machines were needed to reduce labor costs or to improve efficiency, there is no argument of the merits of the purchases. If they were purchased to reduce taxes, it may be false economics. The farmer may have saved 30 cents on the dollar in income taxes but could have increased depreciation costs by 70 cents on the dollar, not to mention the increase in operating costs. If farm income declines in 1974, careful planning will be needed before making additional major machinery investments. The first costs and the operating costs will be higher, and when used on limited acreages, it might not be a profitable investment. Some hiring of

custom work has considerable merit and could reduce production costs.

The problem of wet basements confronts many homeowners. The place to start preventing this condition is during construction in placing a tile drainage system away from the foundation wall. After the house is built there are several practices to reduce the problem; one is to slope the soil away from the house for 10 feet or more; this carries surface water away. Secondly, keep eavestroughs and downspouts in good condition and carry the roof water away from the foundation. Another correction is to install a sump pump in the basement to remove excess water. An automatic dehumidifier can be installed to reduce

humidity. Open basement windows only when outside is cooler than inside air. Damp basements are not easy to correct.

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Timely Tips for Women

By Doris W. Thomas
Extension Home Economist
HOW TO BUY FURNITURE

— If you choose carefully, used furniture can be a good buy. There are any number of places where you can find good, substantial furniture at low cost such as newspaper ads, bulletin boards, garage sales and auctions. You must choose carefully, however, and know what you need most.

Budget limited? You can use your own creativity and refinish or repair some pieces that you can buy for a few dollars.

When you go to look for such bargains for your home you might remember these five points:

1. What will the furniture be used for - a couch that will also serve for sleeping, or just one to sit on?
2. Check the framework - is it put together on a good frame?
3. Look carefully at the legs of furniture, especially if they are small. Are they well-balanced?
4. Are the drawers suitable - painted or varnished? Unfinished wood swells in damp weather and causes drawers to stick.
5. Is the piece of furniture

repairable? Can you do the work yourself or does it require professional skill?

You can seldom return used furniture. So know what you are buying. It can be a good buy - if you choose wisely.

KNIVES FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES

— When shopping for knives, look for ones of the size and shape suited to the purpose. Get a well-balanced knife that is comfortable to hold. Knives vary in length and shape of blade and each has its purpose. Your jobs can be easier if you have knives best suited for each task.

+A paring knife has a blade 2 to 3 inches long and varies in shape. Such a knife is useful for peeling, removing eyes from vegetables and pitting fruits.

+A utility knife has a blade 5 to 7 inches long. Use it to trim and slice tomatoes, and fruit and to bone meats, fish and poultry.

+A carver has a blade 8 to 9 inches long. It's stiff and has a comparatively straight back edge and curved point on the cutting edge. This knife makes it easy to carve meat or fowl.

+A slicer has a long, narrow, flexible blade, 8 to 9 inches long. This knife is especially suitable for slicing boneless meats and cheese. Its narrow blade does a better job on cold meats while the wide blade of the carving knife is better for hot meals.

+A butcher knife has a heavy, broad and stiff blade, 6 to 8 inches long. The cutting edge is curved and the point is sharp. A butcher knife is good for cutting large pieces of meat, heads of cabbage, melons and squashes.

+The edge of a bread knife is 7 to 8 inches long. A finely serrated cutting edge of a scalloped edge is desirable for slicing bread and cakes.

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