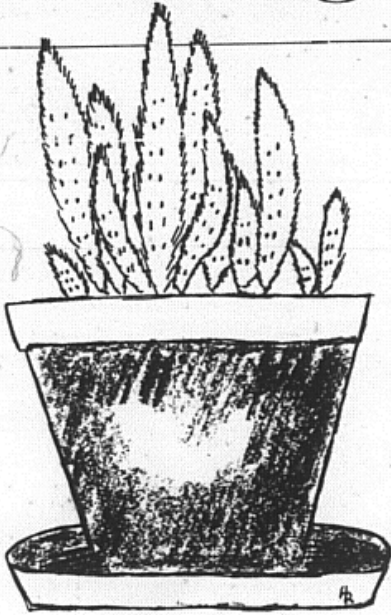


# gardening



## Indoors fine for aloe vera

By Pat Leuchtman  
leisure Columnist

**N**ow that the garden is closed down and it is really beginning to get cold, it's time to turn to my houseplants with renewed interest.

A philodendron, which grows so easily and lushly for the novice, was the first houseplant I owned. I went on to add a rubber tree that I bought in the supermarket, a spider plant given to me by a friend and an ornamental pepper given me by the gardener at the University of Massachusetts conservatory. Many other plants have come and gone from my living room jungle, but

there is such a wide variety of houseplants that I have just begun to sample what's available.

This past spring I admired a large aloe vera belonging to a neighbor. The aloe is a very handsome plant that actually belongs to the lily family although you would not think so to look at its large fleshy leaves. They grow in a kind of rosette shape and are edged with benign spines.

My neighbor instantly dug up one of the large "babies" that had sprung up around the base of the mother. I took it home and potted it in a clay pot. It is still doing beautifully and has sent up its own babies so that I can give a couple away come Christmas.

First I crocked the pot well. That is, I filled the bottom of the pot with at least an inch of pebbles to insure good drainage. The aloe is a succulent and you do not want to keep the roots too wet.

Then I mixed a commercial potting soil about 2 to 1 with vermiculite, again to create a potting mix that would drain quickly. I mixed a little lime and bone meal into the soil as well.

The aloe grows very slowly and will not need to be repotted for years. However, it will need added nutrition so top-dress it in its pot with compost or rich soil from time to time.

Through the spring and summer I only watered it when the soil was very dry. Now that it is sitting in my south window I water it very sparingly because it has entered its dor-

mant period when very little growth is taking place.

As I've said, the aloe will send up little suckers that can be cut off and potted in the manner I've described.

You can also propagate this plant by taking cuttings just before the leaf joint. Allow the cutting to dry for two or three days until the severed joint has formed a wrinkled skin. Then insert it into damp, sandy soil and in time it will develop roots. Remember to keep the soil just barely damp. You do not want it to be too wet or the cutting will

help it heal. Actually it is effective on many skin irritations, sunburn, insect bites and blemishes. There are many commercial skin salves and face creams that contain aloin which is derived from the aloe.

The aloe is an ideal houseplant. It doesn't need constant watching and watering. It will tolerate bright sun and low humidity. It will also tolerate low temperatures at night; even 45 degree temperatures will not harm it.

Actually one small benefit of the energy crunch that has caused every-

The following information is provided by the Franklin County Extension Service:

### Now is the time to:

- Check condition of stored fruits and vegetables.
- Brace newly planted trees.
- Rake up the last of the leaves.
- Keep house plants out of drafts.

### Note:

- If you plan to have a living Christmas tree this year, dig the hole where it will be planted before the ground freezes.
- Not too late to plant tulips or daffodils.
- Don't wrap outdoor shrubs with plastic; the heat build-up will kill plants.

Garden Calendar



rot.

One name for the aloe is "medicine plant" and that is why I wanted one. Inside the skin of the leaf is a thick, clear jelly-like substance that can be applied to a minor burn to

one to lower their thermostats is that these lower temperatures are extremely beneficial to most houseplants. Overheating is much more inhibiting to a plant's healthy growth than low temperatures. □

## Sculpting

### Continued from Page 5

technical rather than an artistic decision. In any case, sculptors who use flaming torches can be rather frightening.

Regardless of a sculptor's preferred style, all face the greatest handicap of all: graven images are no longer in vogue. Old-time sculptors were lucky. All they had to do was to construct another god, and they were in business. But, of course, there were disadvantages in this, too. Imagine the disappointment of the sculptor who must have spent many long, arduous hours creating the Golden Calf. And then there were the medieval Christians who knocked the noses off every Greek and Roman god they found.

In modern times sculpture still retains some of this intrinsic mysticism. The first thing to come crashing to the ground during revolutions are the towering statues of the ex-dictator. During last year's

Iranian revolution, scores of sculptures of the shah were abruptly doped.

A couple of years ago somebody fished out of the Connecticut River a portrait head of Hitler. The Brattleboro police tried to pin the evil work on Mark Fenwick, who had, coincidentally, complained of a theft of one of his own works about four weeks previously. Mark vigorously denied having done the Hitler piece, his politics being quite the opposite.

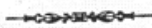
Who sculptured the head, why, and when remains a mystery; the unfortunate thing is that no matter how accomplished the sculptor, it is impossible to even try to consider the talent and effort a Hitler, shah or Stalin portrait exhibits.

Ah well, regardless of economics, politics and just plain inconvenience, sculpture will always be created in attics, basements, apartments and forests, for there is no more satisfying way to occupy the free moments of life. □

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