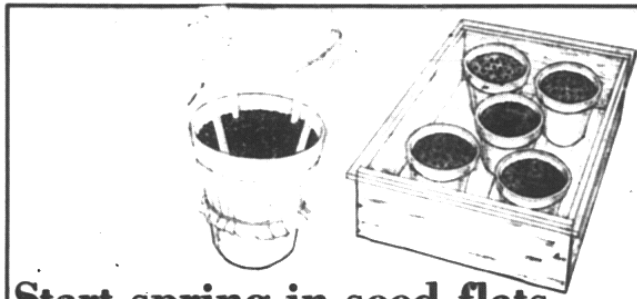


HOME & GARDEN



Start spring in seed flats

By PAT LEICHTMAN
It's March and with such a spring-like February when we were plunged into a premature mud season, I finally rushed to send in my seed orders. They should have gone in earlier, but I had trouble making those final decisions like should I stick with Kentucky wonder pole beans or should I try Thomas' Famous White Dutch Runner Beans? The Vermont Bean Seed catalog promises that "it will yield double of any of the pole varieties" and "the blossoms will attract hummingbirds by the score." That is quite a sales pitch for a quarter pound of been and it finally proved irrevocable.

Well, those decisions were made at last and the orders are out. Now I am scrambling to gather my equipment to start the flats of seedlings once the orders arrive. My flats come in all sizes and made of all materials. I have some large plastic trays, some small flats, a big wooden flat, and a selection of peat pots, peat pellets and an assortment of milk cartons and styrofoam cups, all of which will be pressed into service to start my seeds.

The first seeds to be planted are tomato, pepper and eggplant. These are long season vegetables and should be started 10 or 12 weeks before they can be set outdoors in the garden.

Fill a flat with a mixture of peatling soil and vermiculite, mixed about 4 to 1. Water well. I mark my rows with those little plastic stakes you can get from garden supply houses and then plant the seeds about 1 inch apart in rows that are about 2 inches apart. Cover the seeds with a thin layer of peatling soil. A rule of thumb is that seeds should be covered with soil to a depth that is equal to double the thickness of the seed.

The seeds should sprout in a week or 10 days. After another two weeks or so they will have developed their first set of true leaves and they can be transplanted into another flat, using the same soil mixture, but spacing the seedlings further apart. Two months after planting the seedlings should be looking healthy and sturdy and they

move them into a more spacious flat. When it is time, they will tolerate root transplanting into the garden very well.

Cucurbits is the name given to plants like squash, melons, gourds, cucumbers and pumpkins. They will not tolerate bare root transplanting at all. Since they do not like to have their

GARDEN CALENDAR

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

- Now is the time to:
- Prune fruit trees
 - Sow alyssum, salvia, petunia, early cabbage seeds inside
 - Force forsythia twigs for indoor blooms

Note:

- watch for carpenter ants as warm weather approaches
- Give seedlings lots of light
- Children ACT FAST SO DO POISONS! is the theme for this year's

should be transplanted a second time into peat pots filled with peatling soil. They will have a month to grow to a height of 6 to 10 inches before they go into the garden the first of June. Of course, they will have to be hardened off gradually before going outside permanently.

The brassicas (cabbage family) are just harder than the tender plants. They can go into the garden in the middle of May and they can be started indoors four to six weeks before that. The procedure is the same except that they do not need the final transplanting. Plant the seed in a flat, and when the seedlings start to get crowded,

National Poison Prevention Week, March 15-21.

You can register now for the Franklin County Small Farms Conference to be held March 23. Contact the Franklin County Extension Service for a registration form.

A two-part program for home fruit tree growers will be held March 18. Part one "Pruning Fruit Trees" will be held at Clarksville Fruit Farm from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. Part two "Insects and Disease Control for Fruit Trees" will be held at the Extension Service office in the courthouse from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. Call 774-2902 to register.

roots disturbed they must be planted directly into peat pots or pellets about the first of May and set into the garden the first of June, put soil and all. Just be sure to bury the peat pot completely otherwise the exposed portions will act as a wick and draw the precious moisture away from the tender roots.

It's March and I'm starting to start gardening again. By starting seeds in flats I am not only getting a jump on the season, I'm also getting my hands back in the soil again and I can feel that maybe the real spring is not so far away at all.

Starflowers: good annuals for everlasting color

By EARL ARONSON
AP Newsfeatures

Put some starflowers in your garden in the dainty season, especially if you like to make dried arrangements. We did, to our great pleasure.

What we planted last season was scabiosa stellata. They're round, the light-brown heads with little florets containing dark, spiky, starlike flowers. They resemble space satellites. The stiff stems can grow to two feet in length.

The time to select flowers for drying is when you check your seed catalogs for spring planting. Often the companies will group flowers that are good for drying, perhaps under the heading of "ever-lasting."

Look for such annis as starflowers, statice, larkspur, marigold, cornflower, miller, cockscomb and celendia. You can dry them hung upside-down in bunches or standing upright in jars.

Among perennials you can dry the same way are astilbe, baby's breath, lavender, lemon verbena, flowering onion, beeham and butterfly weed. The onion - allium gurganum and other varieties - make fine, tall displays with spherical heads.

There are other flowers better for drying in sand or borax, including annual asters, balsam, Canterbury bells (a biennial), annual daisies, cornflower, cornflower, cosmos, geranium, gypsophila, stock, snapdragon and zinnia. Also use the drying process for perennial asters, balloon flowers, columbine, coneflower, coral-bells, delphinium, painted nettle, and chrysanthemums, peonies, sunnys, day lilies, iris, gladiolus, lily of the valley and roses.

Back to those starflowers. Ours were statice, which Burpee Seed obtained from the Botanical Garden in Uppsala, Sweden, and offered last year for the first time.

They like a well-drained, sunny place. Plant seeds one-quarter inch deep in well-cultivated soil, feeding a balanced fertilizer after flowering ends. When plants are at least an inch tall, thin to about 12-15 inches apart.

In early fall, pick the starflowers when their heads are green-brown, before seeds have shattered. Hang them upside down in a warm, dry place, or stand them upright in jars until thoroughly dry. Heads may be sprayed with hair spray or clear acrylic to preserve them better.

They'll make fine Christmas-tree ornaments if sprayed silver, gold or red.

An excellent method of preserving flowers, including wedding bouquets and corsages, is with silica gel. Put flowers in a shoe box or other container of adequate size and pack silica gel under and around them. The gel removes moisture rapidly without causing a change in color or shape. Shake the box so that all blossoms are covered. Close the container tightly and don't open it for about two weeks. You can use florist's wire to help support stems later.

The best time to pick flowers intended for drying is just before their centers unfold. That's when their color is brightest.

Don't wait until too late in the season to harvest flowers for drying. There may not be enough of them and they may be past their prime.

Any queries about gardening problems must be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

For Earl Aronson's "Associated Press Guide to House Plants," send \$1 to House Plants, AP Newsfeatures, 10 Rockefeller Plaza, New York, N.Y. 10020.

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Ants cause damage

Carpenter ants are up and about. And according to the Franklin County Extension Service their increased activity can damage your home.

Carpenter ants are black and between one-quarter and three-eighths of an inch in length. They do not eat wood but do damage it while digging their nests.

Chances of infestation is increased if firewood was stored in the house or garage last winter.

If you think your house may be infested, an outside pest control professional should be called for a positive identification.

of the vermin, bring a few samples in a closed jar to the Extension Service office in the Franklin County Courthouse.

Killing a few ants will not solve the problem, the nests must be destroyed.

Once a nest is located you can apply an insecticide yourself but an exterminator should be contacted if a large infestation is suspected or if a nest cannot be located.

A free carpenter ant fact sheet is now available at the Franklin County Extension Service office. Call 774-2902 for more information.

US home builders are making their own sunny future

By CHARLES E. DOLE
Real Estate Editor

LAS VEGAS - Even though the mood of U.S. home builders is far from buoyant these days, it definitely is sunny. A contradiction in terms? Not when the "sunny" applies to solar energy, both passive and active, and its potential for slashing home-energy costs in the future.

Those attending the National Association of Home Builders annual convention-expedition here were reminded that in 1980, \$1 billion was spent on solar installations in the US. Looking to the opportunities in the future, according to solar proponents from all over the country.

Showing the increasing attention now being directed to the sun, a year ago a handful of the displays were focused on solar. By contrast, the number of solar displays this year exceeded 10.

Passive solar systems especially are significant, say builders. In a passive solar installation, the home itself functions as a solar heating or cooling system with little or no support from mechanical devices.

Large south-facing window walls, for example, not only bring the view inside the house, but also the heat of the sun. The heat can thus be stored in a "thermal mass," usually concrete, adobe, brick, or water located in the floor, or a south-facing fireplace. Vents or fans circulate the heat when it's needed.

Prospects for the future are high, builders were told. By the turn of the century, at least 20 percent of all new homes are expected to include some kind of solar system for heating and/or cooling.

The retrofit market is 40 times greater than for new houses, assert proponents. Meanwhile, 10 energy-saving homes now are being built across the US in a large-scale project sponsored both by the NAHB and the National Council of the Housing Industry, an organization within the NAHB of nationally known manufacturers and suppliers of building products and services.

The houses, located in California, Colorado, Florida, Maryland, Minnesota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas and Washington, D.C., will be monitored for two years by the NAHB Research Foundation of Rockville, Md., so as to put a figure on the actual money saving over a more conventional system. The Department of Energy is cooperating in the project.

Participating builders were chosen in a nationwide competition. Energy-saving features are more and more important in new construction, say builders.

In an NAHB survey of recent home buyers

• Sixty percent said that energy features were an important part of their purchase decision.

• Seventy-nine percent indicated that energy efficiency will be important when they buy their next home.

• Ninety-four percent said they were willing to pay more money for added energy efficiency in their home.

The 10 energy-efficient homes now under construction by NAHB, depending on the area, include such features as energy-collecting skylights, highly insulated glass, high-energy air conditioner controlled by a microelectronic thermostat, push-button plumbing system which mixes water to the desired temperature close to the water heater (thus saving up to half the energy required to heat water), and so-berheavily insulating.

Home builders, both in the North and the South, already have increased the level of insulation substantially in the past year.

David Johnston, head of the newly formed Passive Solar Industries Council, says "with the housing industry in a slump, builders have time to learn how to build homes smarter. When sales pick up again, smart builders can enjoy a competitive edge by offering attractive sun-filled rooms with low utility bills."

A major goal of the Passive Solar Industries Council is to provide additional information on passive solar design to builders so they can put it to work.

Many builders are doing just this. James Leach of the Waverland Hills Development Corporation, one of the builders now participating in the NAHB energy-saving-home demonstration project, has provided a greenhouse-sunroom which will give both active and passive solar energy for a three-bedroom house in Boulder, Colo.

Sun flowing through a 140-square-foot skylight will heat a rock storage bed below the living room fireplace wall. Part of the skylight acts as a solar collector to preheat the home's hot-water supply. A smaller skylight turns a portion of the basement family room into a second greenhouse.

The 2,800-square-foot home uses an insulated glazing

system which consists of clear plastic sheeting sandwiched between two layers of glass.

After struggling through the worst new-homeing year since 1975, builders are looking for an improvement in housing starts of 5 to 10 percent, compared with 1980. If - and this is a huge maybe - mortgage rates fall to 13 percent or lower.

If they do not fall to that level, then 1981 could be another bad year, builders sigh.

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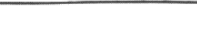
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