

HOME & GARDEN



Recorder Photo by Jim Mahoney

Future homes

Greg Major of Titan Roofing of Chicopee works on the former Weldon Hotel which is being converted to 105 apartments for the elderly. The \$3.7 million project,

slated for completion next April, is running on schedule according to E.A. Gralia Construction Company, Inc. of Longmeadow, the general contractor for the project.

When to harvest your backyard crops

When do I pick? This is one of the most often asked question by backyard gardeners this time of year. Here are some tips from the Cooperative Extension Service:

- SHELL BEANS — Don't pick now. Let them dry on the bush, then shell for winter.
- SNAP BEANS — Pick when pods are small and straight; about pencil size.
- BEETS — Harvest at any stage. When the beets are thinned use the thinnings, tops and roots.
- BROCCOLI — When heads are tight and fully

formed and before flowers start to open. Many side sprouts mature after central sprout matures.

- CARROTS — Harvest at any stage.
- CAULIFLOWER — Harvest just as soon as head looks well-formed and before breaking appears.
- CHARD — Harvest from half-grown stage on, twisting off outer leaves at base; new ones continue to grow.
- CORN — Harvest as soon as silks have dried and kernels ooze "milk" if picked.
- CUCUMBER — Pick when half mature, before the seeds become firm and

chewy.

- EGGPLANT — Harvest fruits from half-grown size on.
- PEPPERS — Harvest at any stage; sweet green peppers are more nutritious when red ripe.
- WHITE POTATOES — Dig any time after tops die.

Store in a dark cool place. They turn green in the light.

- SPINACH — Harvest leaves or entire plants from half-grown stage on.
- SUMMER SQUASH — Harvest a few days after full bloom when young and tender before seeds become firm.

TOMATOES — Harvest fruits when plump; slightly soft and fully colored. Mature green tomatoes will ripen in about 14 days at 65-70 degrees Fahrenheit.

WATERMELON — Rip the melon with knuckles. A crisp metallic sound indicates immaturity; a dull, flat sound suggest maturity.

Sweet scents

Flowers that please the nose

By PAT LEUCHTMAN
Recorder Columnist

Vegetable gardens are practical and flower gardens are beautiful; but there is another dimension to gardening — scent. Many new hybrid flowers have lost their fragrance in the search for new colors and flower forms, but it is possible to find flowers as fragrant as they are lovely.

As I've driven back and forth to work this summer I've noticed countless small lamp posts by driveways and walks bedecked with clematis, jackmanni vines with their beautiful large purple blooms. These make quite a show and they are one of the most popular of the clematis, but they don't smell much. There are other varieties available, however. C. paniculata, the sweet autumn clematis, is a hardy vine and probably the most sweetly fragrant of all the clematis. It blooms in August and September when it is covered with clusters of white flowers. It is a strong climber and would make a charming addition to shade a terrace or grace an arbor. In the evening the white flowers will shimmer in the twilight and the air will be filled with a fragrance that some have described as being reminiscent of vanilla and bitter almond.

Clematis montana is another variety that is a strong climber. "Rubens" has delightful deep pink flowers and a lighter fragrance than the paniculata, but might be favored where more color is desired.

All clematis vines have certain requirements. They prefer full sun although they can tolerate some light or intermittent shade. Yet while their heads like to be sun-lit and warmed, their roots need to be kept cool, shaded and moist. This can be accomplished by mulching or with an underplanting of a dense, but shallow-rooted ground cover like pachysandra.

Since the clematis is a long-lived vine it pays to prepare the soil and planting hole well. Clematis is sensitive to PH; the soil should be neutral or slightly alkaline. Test the PH and if the soil is too acid be sure to add a little lime. Excess acidity in the soil is one of the most common reasons for clematis to fail to thrive.

It also needs a soil that is well drained and rich in organic matter. When preparing the planting hole make sure it is a generous size and enrich the soil with compost and peat moss so that it is loose enough for the roots to get off to a fast start. If you prepare well in the first place and fertilize your vine with compost or a general purpose fertilizer during the growing season, you will be rewarded with a profusely flowering vine that will grace your yard and scent the air for many years.

One cannot think of fragrant vines without thinking of the honeysuckle. Lonicera japonica "Halliana" or Hall's honeysuckle is an old fashioned vine that will festoon a fence and scent the air. It's buff-yellow flowers appear all summer and it is so undemanding that it will grow in sun or dense shade. Your biggest problem may be to keep it in bounds.

The standard honeysuckle has been improved upon and one of the most dramatic hybrids is the L. Brownii "Dropmore Scarlet" which bears long-tubed scarlet blossoms in clusters of six for most of the summer. The only problem is that this improvement has been bought at the expense of its fragrance.

An easily grown annual to add to the garden is sweet scented nicotiana or flowering tobacco which blooms from June to August. It transplants easily so it can be started indoors in the early spring for earlier flowering or it can be seeded directly in the garden where you want it to bloom.

Nicotiana come in many colors including white which is particularly lovely at twilight which seems to be the only time I can enjoy my flowers recently.

Another sweetly scented and old fashioned flower is Evening Scented Stock. It is an annual and the 18 inch plants are covered with small lilac flowers, but it is its fragrance which has made it famous. There are also the seven and 10 week stocks which come in many colors and bloom over a long period. They also make excellent cut flowers to bring into the house for arranging. Although they are easily grown from seed, it is best to start them indoors and transplant them to the garden in the spring after all chance of frost is gone.

Roses, herbs and scented geraniums are other plants that can be grown for their perfume, but those are stories for another day.

(Plants and seeds mentioned in this column are available from Wayside Gardens, Hodges, S.C. 29695 and the Geo. W. Park Seed, Inc., Greenwood, S.C. 29647).

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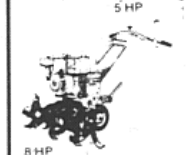
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