

Sharp shears needed for flower cutting

BY TOM DYSON
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Plants and PEOPLE

FROM GARDEN TO VASE
Cutting flowers is best done with sharp shears or a knife to avoid injury to the growing plant. A special pair of cutting scissors may be bought that holds the cut-off stem, allowing the removal to be a one-handed operation.

A slating cut will expose a larger absorbing surface to water and will prevent the base of the stem from being sealed by resting upon the bottom of the vase. It is best to carry a bucket of water to the garden for collecting blooms, rather than the familiar cutting basket. This will allow you to put cuttings directly in water, to prevent an air gap from forming in the water passages of the stems.

Thorny rose stems are a problem when arranging cut flowers, but leave the thorns on to get maximum life from cut blooms.

Research in the Netherlands revealed that removing leaves and thorns from the bottom six to eight inches of rose stems decreased their vase life as compared to defoliated, but not detorned blooms.

PROPAGATION STATION
When pruning away twiggy young growth from rose bushes, make use of the prunings by rooting them and producing new plants.

Treat stem bases with rooting hormone, stick them in soil in a cold frame that is out of the sun and water them well. Keep them watered. If some die before rooting, it's no great loss. Just toss them in the compost, which is where they would have ended up anyway.

Geranium cuttings should be made in late July to start plants for winter and spring indoor bloom. To get flowers in the winter months, you may need to install some fluorescent tubes over the bench or shelves where you grow your plants. To make cuttings, use the tips of branches about four inches long. Cut off the bottom leaves and stick the cuttings about one-third their length in a moist, sand-peat mixture. Roots will develop rapidly and new plants should be ready for potting in about four weeks.

FAIRY RINGS and TOAD-STOOLS

If you see mushrooms, toadstools, or dark green circles in your grass, you have a fungus in your midst. The green circles in grass have been considered through history as places where fairies have danced, where dragons have breathed when sleeping, and where alien spacecrafts have landed.

The fungi that cause these interesting occurrences usually grow in decomposing organic matter, such as a buried root, stump, or board. These fungi are beneficial because they help to break down woody debris and add humus to the soil. In fact,

the dark green circle of grass is caused by nutrients that are released as the fungus grows. The fungus is actually fertilizing a ring in the yard! But mushrooms and dark circles in the lawn can be a nuisance.

There are no chemical controls for these problems, since the fungus often grows so deep that chemicals cannot penetrate sufficiently. Sooner or later, the infestation exhausts its food supply and dies out. Sadly, there are no other controls.

TURNING UP THE HEAT
Hot weather causes a number of problems, and should put the gardener on alert. Here are a few heat-related tips for gardening.

- Protect plants in containers from very high heat caused by light reflection and heat radiation from pavement. Move them to a cooler spot, or shade them during the hottest part of the day. Plants should also be moved to a more sheltered location during severe rain or windstorms like those we have experienced lately.

- Hot, dry weather brings out red spider mites. Inspect roses, evergreens, and marigolds in particular for pale-green coloration. Hold a white sheet of paper underneath a leaf and briskly tap it. Tiny, crawling mites, about the size of small pepper grains, will drop onto the paper if they are present on the leaf. If infestation is light, discourage mites with a forceful, direct spray of water from the hose. Severely infested annual plants can be removed and destroyed. Mild infestations can be controlled with pesticides. Call me at the office weekdays at 482-8431 for advice if you are experiencing this problem.

- Do not use ester formulation weed killers, such as 2,4-D, when air temperatures are over 75 to 80 degrees F., as they may volatilize and drift, causing damage to ornamentals. Non-volatile chemicals, such as amines, are safe to use at higher temperatures. These post-emergent herbicides are most effective when the soil is moist and temperatures are high. As always, carefully read labels on all chemicals before use. They are dan-

gerous to you, and your plants, if misused.

PLANTS HAVE RIGHTS
There are few things more painful to the avid gardener than to discover that her/his own efforts have destroyed beautiful plants. A piece of corrugated cardboard, such as the side from a box, forms an effective and portable barrier to use when spraying a non-selective herbicide next to desired plants.

By changing the angle of the cardboard, it's easy to spray weeds growing right up to the base of the desired plant while shielding the stems, branches, and leaves. Since some herbicide will get on the shield, the same side should always face the sprayer when moved from one location to another.

Do not use this method as a substitute for choosing a still, calm day to spray. Instead, use the shield as an additional safeguard.

THERE'S MONEY IN TREES
Michigan State University reports that over a 50-year lifetime, a healthy tree can generate \$31,250 worth of oxygen, and recycle \$37,500 worth of water. It also provides \$62,000 worth of air pollution control and \$31,250 in soil erosion prevention, not to mention greatly increasing property value and enjoyment, while saving on home cooling in the summer (shade) and heating in the winter (wind break).

Cutting the roots of a tree when ditching, driving and parking on roots, bumping the trunk, improperly paving over roots, or misuse of lawn weed killers can sap the life right out of these valuable plants. Call me anytime you need advice on preventing damage to shade trees.

FLY TRAP UPDATE
Life Boy Scout Doug Pegram is working hard leading a team of Scouts in studying a new control method for biting flies. This is a project involving the Cooperative Extension Service, the Boy Scouts of America, and Olsen Products of Ohio (the trap manufacturer). Fifteen specially designed traps have been set out in Edenton. One trap collected 50 deer flies in two days.

Watch for future updates on the progress of the research. We hope that this will offer a new tool in reclaiming the great outdoors this time of year. The traps are not yet commercially available. This project is part of Doug's Eagle Scout requirements.

Take precautions when trailering boat

BY BARBARA J. WOOD
Florida 16-3 Staff Officer
Public Affairs

The Right Kind of Trailer
If you are buying a trailerable boat, now is the time to choose the proper trailer.

More damage can be done to a boat by the stresses of road travel than by normal water operation. A boat hull is designed to be supported evenly by water. When transported on a trailer, your boat should be supported structurally as evenly across the hull as possible. This will allow for even distribution of the weight of the hull, engine and equipment. It should be long enough to support the whole length of the hull, but short enough to allow the lower unit of the boat's engine to extend freely.

- Rollers and bolsters must be kept in good condition to prevent scratching and gouging of the hull.

- Tie-downs and lower unit supports must be adjusted properly to prevent the boat from bouncing on the trailer. The bow eye on the boat should be secured with either a rope, chain or turnbuckle in addition to the winch cable. Additional straps may be required across the beam of the boat.

- The capacity of the trailer should be greater than the combined weight of the boat, motor, and equipment.

- The tow vehicle must be capable of handling the weight of the trailer, boat, equipment, as well as the weight of the passengers and equipment which will be carried inside. This may require that the tow vehicle be specially equipped with an engine of adequate power, transmission designed for towing, larger cooling systems for the engine and transmission, heavy duty brakes, and

a load bearing hitch attached to the frame, not the bumper.

Check Before You Go Out On the Highway

Before taking your trailerable boat out on the highway, you should run through your checklist as a reminder to make sure that:

- The tow ball and coupler are the same size and bolts with washers are tightly secured. (The vibration of road travel can loosen them.)

- The coupler is completely over the ball and the latching mechanism is locked down.

- The trailer is loaded evenly from front to rear as well as side to side. Too much weight on the hitch will cause the rear wheels of the tow vehicle to drag and may make steering more difficult. Too much weight on the rear of the trailer will cause the trailer to "fish-tail" and may reduce traction or even lift the rear wheels of the tow vehicle off the ground.

- The safety chains are attached crisscrossing under the coupler to the frame of the tow vehicle. If the ball were to break, the trailer would follow in a straight line and prevent the coupler from dragging on the road.

- The lights on the trailer function properly.

- You check the brakes. On a level parking area roll forward and apply the brakes several times at increasing speeds to determine a safe stopping distance.

- The side view mirrors are large enough to provide an unobstructed rear view on both sides of the vehicle.

- You check the tires (including spare) and wheel bearings. Improper inflation may cause difficulty in steering. When trailer wheels are immersed in water, (especially salt water) the bearings should be in-

spected and greased after each use.

- You make certain that water from rain or cleaning has been removed from the boat. Water weighs approximately four pounds per gallon and can add weight that will shift with the movement of the trailer.

Towing Precautions

- Allow more time to brake, accelerate, pass, and stop.

- Remember the turning radius is also much greater; curbs and roadside barriers must be given a wide berth when negotiating corners.

- Prior to operating on the open road, practice turning, backing up, etc. on a level, unobstructed parking area.

Pre-Launching Preparations

When you arrive at a boat ramp, you can be certain that others will be there launching their boats, too. Out of courtesy to other boaters and to prevent rushing, prepare your boat for launching away from the ramp.

- Check the boat to ensure that no damage was caused by the trip.

- Raise the engine's lower unit (remove supports) to proper height for launching so that it will not hit bottom.

- Remove tie-downs and make sure that the winch is properly attached to the bow eye and locked in position.

- Put the drain plug in securely.

- Disconnect the trailer lights to prevent shorting of the electrical system or burning out a bulb.

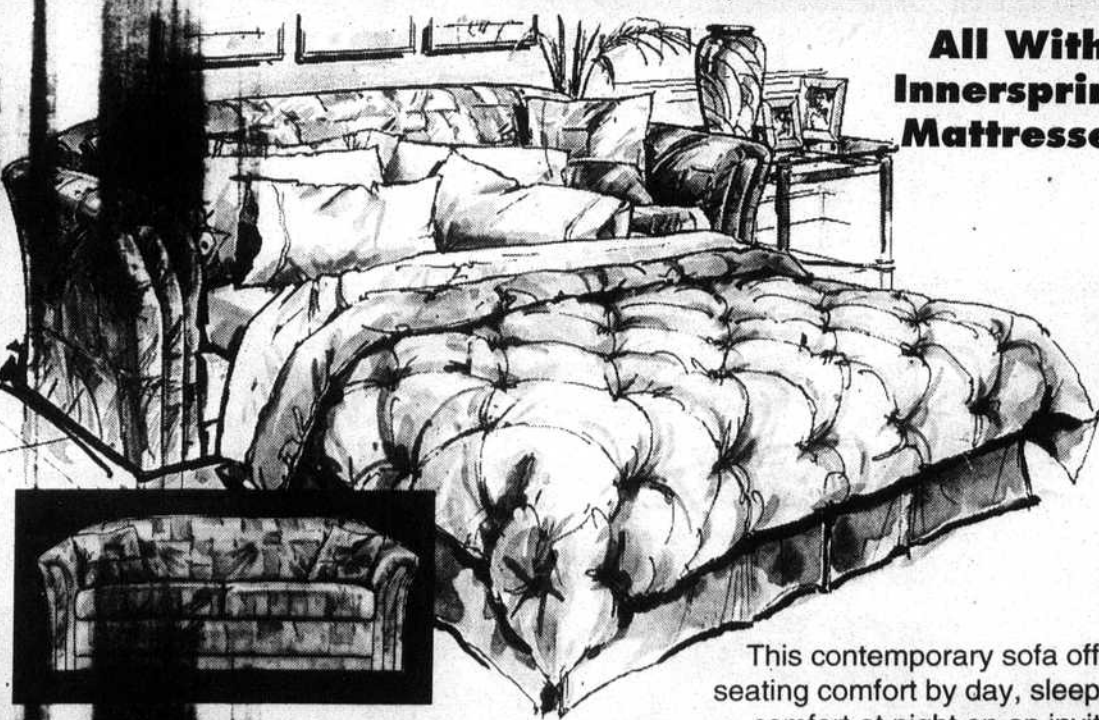
- Attach a line to the bow and the stern of the boat so that the boat cannot drift away after launching, and it can be easily maneuvered to a docking area.

- Visually inspect the launch ramp for hazards such as a steep drop off, slippery area and sharp objects.

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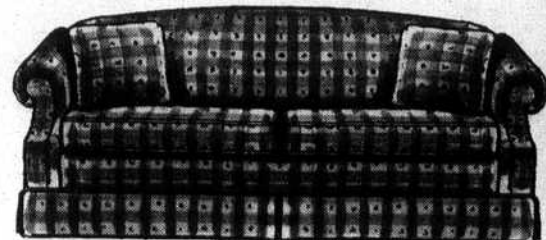
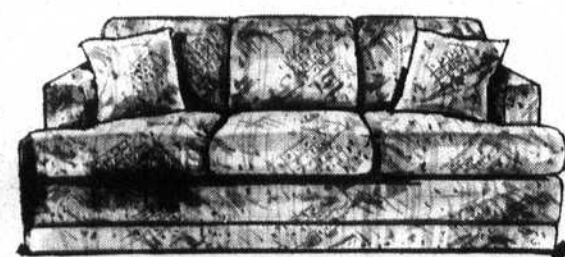
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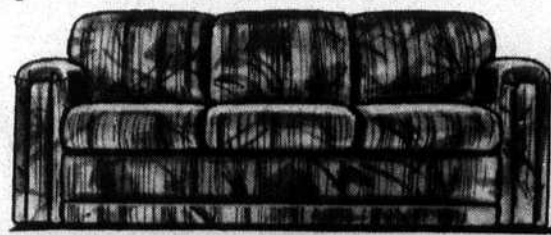
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