

Prepare plants for Spring

Warm weather will return to North Carolina one of these days, and when those first days arrive, you may want to place your house-bound plants outside in the sun for a few hours.

Placing the potted plants outside on those first mild days of early spring will help them begin adjusting to the outdoors before you move them out for the spring and summer.

North Carolina State University extension horticulturists suggest that you be cautious. These pampered plants will be

tender and sensitive to the weather for a while. Don't run too many risks with sudden drops of temperature, particularly at night. Bring the plants back in until spring really sets in.

This limited exposure to the outside will help prepare the plants for placing them, pot and all, in the flower border and keeping them there until next fall.

Some of them may need repotting. If you haven't attended to this, repot the root-bound ones and let them get over this jolt before taking them outside.

Lower your bills with insulation

Insulation and storm windows and doors pay for themselves in lowered energy costs. But since renters pay energy costs, landlords often feel it is not worth the expense to make property energy efficient.

If your apartment or rented house falls into this category, there are still several low-cost measures you can take to lower your bills, says Sandra Dellinger, extension housing specialist, North Carolina State University.

The major goal is to keep warm air in and cold air out. Weatherstrip and caulk around doors, windows and plumbing and duct work.

Cracks under doors cause a tremendous heat loss and are also simple to stop. Sew up a draft stopper. This is a long, snake-

like piece of fabric filled with sand and placed in front of the door. You can get instructions on making a draft stopper from your local county agricultural extension office.

If curtains sway in the breeze on windy nights, your apartment probably doesn't have storm windows. Put in plastic on the inside or outside of the window, taking care not to damage the walls or windows. Masking or duct tape will hold the plastic in place on the inside. Tacks or nails will leave air leaks.

Sheets of acrylic can also be purchased, cut to size and hold tightly in place with magnetic strips. This is a more expensive option, but the windows can be taken with you to a new home or apartment. Acrylic is also clearer than plastic.

Are you financially secure?

Do you have financial security? You have reached this enviable position when, according to Dr. Thelma Hinson, extension family resource management specialist, North Carolina State University, you can give a positive answer to the following questions:

--Do you have enough money to meet everyday needs?

--Have you set aside enough to cover probable emergencies?

--Are you protected against major financial risks, such as fire, disability, death, unemployment and liability? Insurance usually provides this coverage.

--Do you have enough money or assets to buy needed items in the future?

sional sports uniforms and bedsheets, predicts the extension specialist.

NEUTRALS ARE IN

The majority of people purchasing draperies have strong feelings for neutrals. "They are the big trendmaker with natural wood, brick and stone so popular in decorating," explains Dr. Wilma Hammett, extension interior design specialist, North Carolina State University.

The no-color colors of unbleached linen and silk or polyester disguised as silk are the big looks today. Colors leading the way are off-white, champagne, warm beiges, eggshell, mushroom and warm gray.

"Neutral color schemes are a restful retreat after the onslaught of colors and noises outside the home," Dr. Hammett points out.

Drapery manufacturers also point out that draperies are often purchased after upholstered furniture and carpets, so a neutral color is chosen to avoid clashes.

Among popular colors, blue is a big seller and soft violets and mauves are still popular. Gold is at a low point, but some soft pineapple yellows are quite popular. Colors are clearer and softer, but not really pastel, says the extension specialist.

UNUSUAL SYNTHETIC

Polypropylene is a very unusual synthetic fiber. It provides warmth without weight and can draw the body's moisture away from the skin, so it could be comfortable in both hot and cold weather, says Dr. Harriet Tutterow, extension clothing specialist, North Carolina State University.

Consumers are now buying polypropylene in disposable diapers and new thermal underwear. Within the next few years, look for it in ski wear, swim wear, running shorts, golf shirts, profes-

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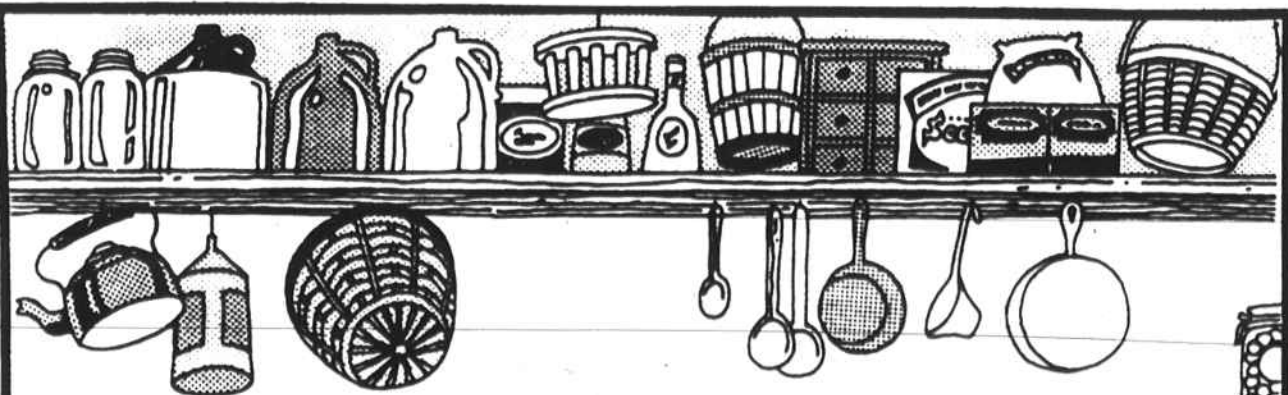
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