

THE LONE RANGER

BY FRAN STRIKER



The Home Front

House plants have but one mission—to be decorative. But our own blissful ignorance in the selection of a plant may defeat this purpose so that we shrug off our failure with the excuse that we have no "luck" with house plants.

Given the right plant and a basic understanding of the essentials that make for good growing conditions, every house plant will fulfill its mission.

As to the choice of plants for window gardening. The majority of flowering plants have but one blooming period each year. The beautiful specimen you buy at the florist's shop was taken months ago by the gardener, cared for and stimulated until it is in full bloom.

The gardener has controlled the conditions of soil, temperature and moisture regularly and systematically, and has undoubtedly told the florist all about the care necessary to keep his stock fresh and healthy in the shop. Ask the florist about watering, temperature and light.

The clay pot with bottom drainage hole should be set on a surface that permits a certain amount of air to circulate under the pot. A saucer filled with small pebbles or coarse ashes or charcoal can be placed under the pot. This prevents the plant from standing in stagnant water.

If the plant is placed in its pot in a jardiniere, this should be large enough to allow some circulation of air around the pot. Standing water should be removed daily.

A plant potted in a non-porous container without a bottom opening should have a good inch of drainage material at the bottom. Large pebbles, broken bits of pottery or good-sized marbles are good for this purpose.

If you are sending a plant to a friend it's a good idea to enclose simple suggestions regarding its care. Should it be watered from the bottom? Does it like lots of sun? How much water does it need? Should it be kept in the coolest spot in the house? These answers will prolong the pleasure your friend has with your gift.

One of the most satisfactory bulbous plants for the indoor garden is amaryllis. Put each bulb in a pot only two inches larger than its diameter. It will last several years.

The begonias all do well under any conditions and will bloom all winter. They thrive better if neglected a bit because they can not stand overwatering.

Geraniums are another plant that resent too much water. Give them plenty of water when the top soil feels really dry. Then remove all excess water immediately from the saucer under the pot. With begonias they like south and east windows.

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