

Agriculture

African daisies offer spectacular color

One of the most exciting border plants around is Gerbera Jamesonii, or Transvaal, or African daisy. Native to Madagascar, Asia, Africa, and Indonesia, the flower is downright flamboyant. The large, wooly leaves form a background for four-inch, daisy-like blooms that range in color from cream, pink, and gold up to salmon and shrimp tones, and on to a neon flame, with red or yellow centers.

Gerberas were mainly grown in commercial greenhouses for

cut flowers. The past few years, however, have seen gerberas escape glass houses and nestle into southern borders.

They can not survive frost, but wintering them over is an easy matter. First of all, it may be advisable to grow gerberas in pots which can be taken directly out of the ground. This method would make this species feasible for coastal gardeners, because moisture and mulching could be better controlled.

Before threat of frost, lift pots,

brush dirt off carefully, and bring into an area that can be kept at 45 degrees. Alternatives other than a cool greenhouse could be an enclosed sunporch or used bedroom.



Keep soil barely moist. Soon all foliage will wilt and turn brown, making the plants appear quite dead. Not so. They develop excellent root systems while in that cold atmosphere.

In March, move plants to a bright area that can be kept at 60 degrees or above. They may be divided then, if necessary, although an eight-to-ten-inch pot will usually support one plant for four or more years. Vigorous growth will commence as soon as the plants feel warmth. From then on, apply a weak liquid fertilizer or cow manure tea every two weeks or so.

Gerberas may also be propagated by seeds started early winter in a well-lit temperature greenhouse. Or try your hand next spring at cutting side shoots to root in a mixture of soil, peat moss and sand.

Varieties from Thompson and Morgan include 'Dwarf Hippopot,' eight to twelve inches, is excellent for window boxes. Mardi

Gras, '18 to 24 inches is an early bloomer, while 'T & M Blackheart Mixed,' 15 to 20 inches has huge colorful blooms with a deep brown center. This is one variety that commands premium price in major flower markets, the seed company claims.

Burpee's 'California Mixed' is a good combination of delightful colors, at a not-so-premium price. New for 1986 is Park's 'Parade,' a dwarf double type to plant from seed.

It's 'Rainbow' series is basically a pot variety, free-blooming, on 6 to 8 inch stems, colors include scarlet, yellow, rose, pink, white and crimson.

Pan American Seeds has introduced 'Gigi,' very tall with bright pastel colors, excellent for cut flowers, or in middle of a partially shaded border.

I ordered small 'starter' plants from Bluestone Perennials, an Ohio nursery, that were extremely strong, and filled out quickly.

Always cut, not break or pinch, flowers at the stem's base. Remove spent flowers promptly to encourage more blooms.

After the soil outside has heated up, pots may be placed directly into the border in a protected-spot that is mostly sunny. Soil should be rich and well-drained.

With this minimum attention, African daisies will reward you with a spectacular festival of color from May to frost.



Wayland Byrum of Hobbs no-till drill to local farmers at Implements displays a new the no-till meeting.

An ever-changing rural America

People who live in the metropolitan areas of the country probably have an outmoded perception of rural America. They tend to think that rural means farming and ranching, declining population, isolation, lack of services, poor educational opportunities, and so on.

ral areas have become much more similar to metro areas, yet they are far more diverse among themselves.

Economists and rural sociologists at the U.S. Department of Agriculture have come out with a report on the social and economic structure of rural America that divided the 2,443 nonmetro counties into seven classifications, rather than looking at them as a whole. Actually, between 1970 and 1980 population increased 16 percent in those counties—about twice the rate of metropolitan counties.

Counties dominated by farming number only 702, less than a third of the nonmetro counties and only 13 percent of the nonmetro population. It is in these counties that farmers have the most political clout; but they represent a small minority of congressional district.

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The facts are quite different. The past 20 years have witnessed unprecedented increases in employment and population in cities, small towns and open country of rural America. Viewed as a whole, nonmetropolitan or ru-

Hospital continues as referral center

Albemarle Hospital, named by the federal government as a rural regional referral center, continues to be one of only a handful of hospitals in the state and southeastern United States to be so designated.

The status, granted to rural hospitals which meet rigid government criteria, indicates service to a broad area, a highly specialized medical staff, and proficiency in handling severe illnesses. Albemarle was named as a rural regional referral center late in 1984 at a time when only 20 hospitals in the southeastern United States, and eight hospitals in North Carolina qualified. Government officials said last week, that now 45 hospitals in the southeast, including nine hospitals in North Carolina are approved for the status.

"I would say that it is difficult to achieve, looking at the number of rural hospitals out here and comparing it with the relatively small number who qualify," said Mark Rogers, an Atlanta accountant with the Health Care Financing Administration of the Department of Health and Human Services, the federal agency which hospitals in the eight-state southeastern region.

Albemarle Hospital's Controller, Mike Linker said, "This is an indication of how important we consider our entire service

area. Albemarle Hospital serves a wide band of counties in the northeastern part of North Carolina. That includes Pasquotank, Camden, Currituck, Dare, Perquimans, Gates and other counties in the Albemarle area. Without demonstrable service to such a wide area, we would not have qualified for this referral center designation." Linker is the chief financial officer at Albemarle Hospital. Linker explained that one of the benefits of the referral center designation is that it allows rural hospital like Albemarle to receive federal reimbursements at a higher urban rate.

Hospital Administrator, Robert Jeffries said, "We are particularly proud of this referral center designation, because it reflects the high caliber of Albemarle Hospital's medical staff and our commitment to our entire service area."

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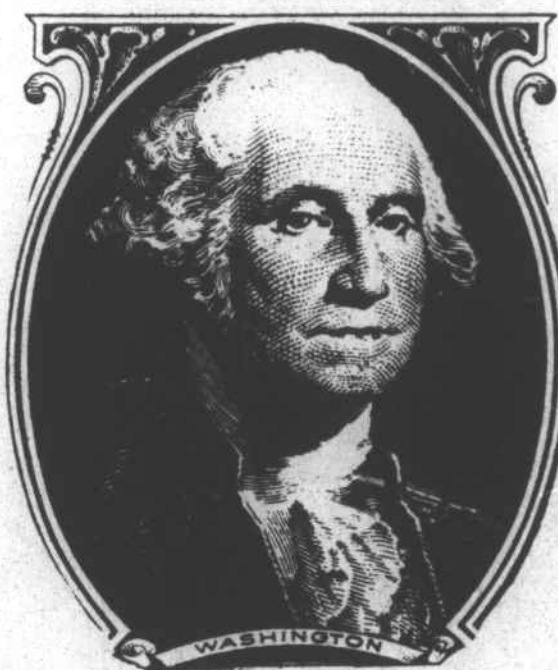
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