

Agriculture

Tips on keeping potted plants alive throughout the year

Potted plants received at Easter bring extra joy to spring. I love yellow chrysanthemums particularly, even, if they are really a fall flower. But I know when fall comes, they will still be with me. Here's how.

Enjoy the blooms, removing fading ones to keep the plant beautiful. Assuming the weather is frost free, take the plants out of pots and set them in fertile, well drained ground in a sunny location. Feed with a diluted fertilizer or cow manure tea.

Pinch new growth every three weeks to produce a bushier plant. Stop by the fourth of July so flower buds will form. Large mum types should be staked. An attractive mulch such as straw, will prevent splashing of soil on opening blooms.

Zebra plants (Aphelandra) from Brazil, are becoming increasingly popular. Their long lasting, showy yellow bracts and green and cream-colored striped leaves give a tropical ambience to even the most conservative living room.

Zebra plants need watering every day. In fact, it does well in a group of plants, all giving off moisture to form their own mini-climate. Supply evaporating water, such as a tray of pebbles or gravel barely covered with water, in which you place the plant. Spray every couple of days.

They are also sensitive, so keep away from draughts or their leaves will drop. Keep in a good light at a minimum temperature of 60 to 65 degrees.

When withering starts, cut flower head off with one or two pairs of



leaves, right above another pair. Continue to water. Soon side shoots will appear. Replant in a larger pot in spring and feed with a liquid house-plant fertilizer in summer and fall.

Azaleas at Easter are particularly appropriate, and I am partial to the Indicas, which have the large double blossoms in gorgeous pastel pinks, salmon, and white.

Lucky recipients should place azalea plants in bright light without direct sun, except perhaps in the morning. Azaleas are thirsty plants. The roots soak up water like a sponge, sometimes requiring watering twice a day when in bloom. Be careful, however, not to let water accumulate inside the florist's foil, which will cause root rot. Once a week place the pot, sans foil, into a pail of water and let it soak its fill. The water will be gradually absorbed.

Azaleas like cool weather for blooming. A daytime temperature of 65 degrees and 55 degrees at night is ideal.

Plants may be moved to the yard as a permanent part of the landscape. Plant in acid soil in a shady

area, and fertilize. Mulch with pine needles, pine bark, or oak leaves. Azaleas have a shallow root system, so do not plant too deeply. Keep moist during the summer heat.

If you are fortunate enough to receive a Madonna lily for Easter, take good care of it. After all, someone has cultivated and loved lilies for at least 4,000 years. A lily was found in a mummy case in Egypt. That's old.

Lilies are now part of our Easter celebration because of biblical association with the Virgin Mary as a symbol of purity. They are also associated with St. Joseph, recalling the belief that he lived chastely with Mary the whole of their married life.

Lilies should be placed in a cool location with plenty of light and adequate water. When the plant feels dry, place the pot in a container of water and allow to soak thoroughly. Florist foil on all potted plants should be removed after three weeks to assure proper drainage.

Prolong blooming by removing pollen-bearing stamens. After flowering has ceased, gradually reduce watering. Store in a cool dark place until danger of frost is over. (The latter suggestion is for early March Easters.)

At that time, sink the plant (and pot, if desired) into the ground. Sometimes the lily will bloom again this season. But that's really gilding the lily as far as I'm concerned. Don't expect it. Be thankful for its beauty once a year.



Pictured left are Stuart and Brian Rayburn in the show position with their animals, below: Leah Harrell works with her animal on showmanship. On Friday, April 10th members of the local 4-H clubs gathered at the farm of Tommy and Sherry Harrell to go over the skills of grooming and showmanship. Richard Lichtenwalner, Area Cattle Specialist was on hand to teach the course.



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Jaycees to host Bass Tournament

The Perquimans County Jaycees will host the Perquimans River Bass Tournament on Saturday, April 18th from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. Registration and weigh-in will be at the Hertford Municipal Boat Ramp.

For more information or to regis-

ter, contact Sara Winslow, Tournament Chairperson, or any Jaycee.

The Jaycees will also host a car wash on Saturday at NCNB. All proceeds will go to Cystic Fibrosis.

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In Finland it was once considered a sign of piety to shoot arrows at trees.

Improvements needed in trade

Buried in a recent article in Fortune magazine was this prediction: "The dollar has declined so long and so far that the stage has been set for a sustained improvement in trade after six years of deterioration." In fact, Fortune expects trade to be the major plus for the U.S. economy over the next few years.

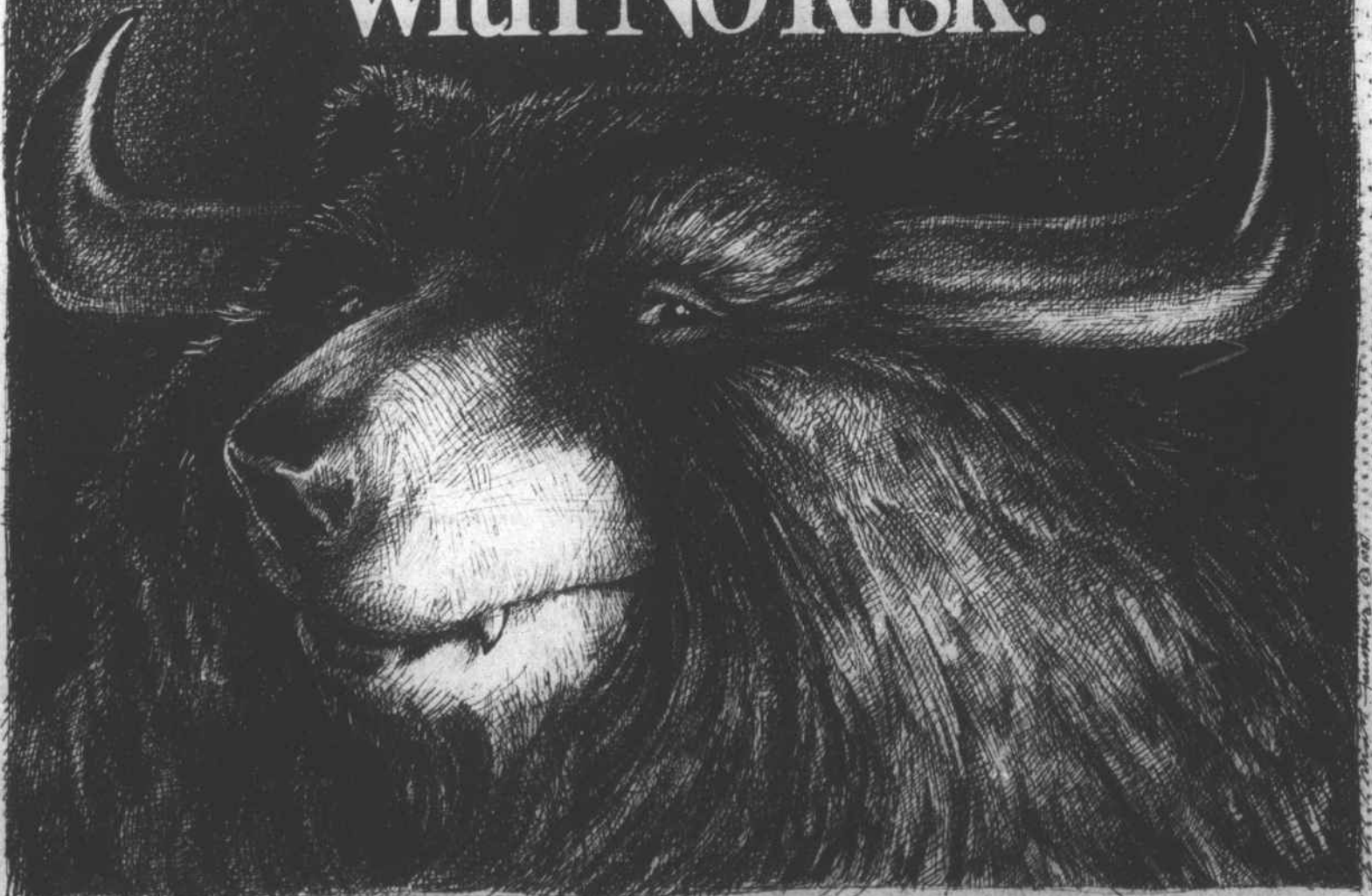
The stage may be set for an improvement in U.S. agricultural trade as well. The falling dollar is one factor, competitiveness generated by the 85 Farm Bill is another, and so are crop problems in China and the Soviet Union.

The Soviets recently entered the U.S. corn market for the first time in almost a year. The USDA has increased its estimate of wheat exports because of activity in the Export En-

hancement Program, with sales anticipated to Eastern Europe, North Africa and China.

Addressing a Senate agriculture subcommittee, American Farm Bureau Federation President Dean Kleckner said the U.S. should extend an export bonus offer of wheat to the Soviets. An offer last fall failed to attract their business, but it was at a fixed price that wasn't any lower than what was available on the open market. For so long now the focus has been on trade problems and sagging farm exports, but there are signs now of an export recovery. We saw it first in cotton and rice and now it may extend to the grains. What a boost to farmer morale and income that would be.

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