

## Give Plants Protection From Cold

A few precautions can help homeowners avoid cold damage to certain plants that frequently fall victims to severe temperatures.

Some of these damage-prone plants are rhododendron, boxwood and some of the other broadleaf evergreens, according to agricultural extension specialists at North Carolina State University. The best way to protect them from icy winds and the winter sun is to

plant them in protected places to begin with. Plants that are already in the wrong places may be successfully moved, if they are fairly young.

Otherwise, some type of screening protection is recommended. For valued plants, you may want to build a scaffold on three sides — east, south and west — then cover the frame with burlap or some similar material.



Turtles give their young no care at all. The mother sea turtle digs a hole on a beach and lays her eggs, covers them with sand and then returns to the sea. The sun hatches the eggs.

## Pinata Remains Strong In Mexican Christmas

The story of Mary and Joseph's search for a place to stay in Bethlehem for the birth of Jesus led to the creation of the pinata, a Mexican Christmas tradition dating back to the colonial period of the 1600s.

Use of the pinata remains strong in Mexico, but other Mexican Christmas traditions are being challenged by customs imported from the United States.

Dr. William H. Beezley, professor of history at North Carolina State University who studies Mexican popular culture, said the pinata was born as a popular effort to relive the story of Mary and Joseph's search for lodging on Christmas night.

"A pinata is a clay bowl or vase filled with goodies," Beezley said. "Little toys, candies, oranges, little treats. Around that clay bowl is a papier-mache figure shaped like an animal, a boat or whatever is the inspiration of whoever makes it. Today, one might see a lot of Walt Disney characters."

The tradition of the pinata is practiced in all areas of Mexico, rural and urban.

"For nine days before Christmas, the children in a neighborhood go door to door, asking if there's room for them—room at the inn," Beezley said. "They are turned down at each house until they get to the last one, the one that has been selected for that evening. There, they are invited inside for a little Christmas party."

As part of the party, the children are blindfolded, spun around and allowed to try to break open a pinata, which hangs above the patio.

While the other children watch, each child takes a turn swinging at the pinata with a pinata bat—a thin, carved and decorated bat slightly shorter than a baseball bat.

Once the pinata is burst and the goodies begin spilling out, all the children scramble to get whatever treats they can. Then the children sing songs, play and have refreshments.

"The tradition of the pinata has now spilled over into other Mexican fiestas, which also often feature fireworks," Beezley said. "Pinatas now have expanded to saint days and birthday celebrations."

Although the use of the pinata is thriving, some Mexicans have begun to abandon other traditional national Christmas customs, or to combine them with U.S. practices.

"In Mexico today it's kind of a toss-up because of television and the proximity to the United States," Beezley said. "Mexicans are being bombard-

ed with U.S. traditions." For example, he said, it is traditionally on Jan. 6, Epiphany, that wise men come and bring presents to Mexican children.

"But that is being altered and getting to be more Santa Claus-oriented," Beezley said. "There are even Christmas trees there now. It is becoming a mixed tradition."



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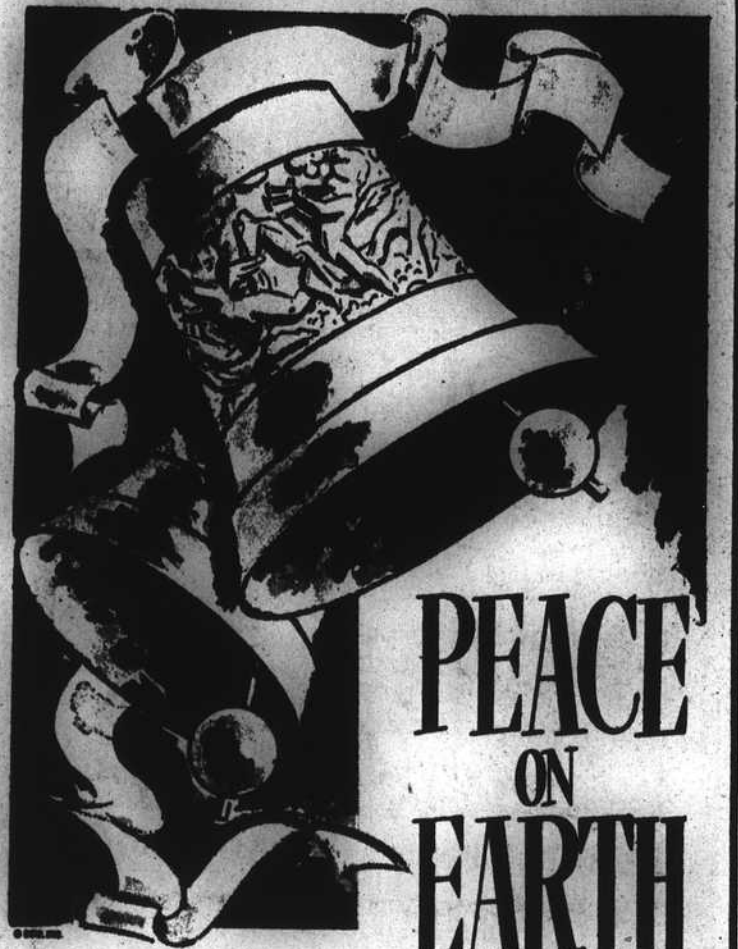
## NEWS IN PICTURES



President Reagan has received his own Olympic gold and silver.

In a White House ceremony, a group of 1988 U.S. Olympic gold medalists including Florence Griffith Joyner, Matt Biondi, Janet Evans and Andrew Maynard along with U.S. Olympic Committee President Robert Helmick presented President Reagan with a set of gold and silver Olympic coins.

The U.S. Olympic Commemorative Coins—a \$5 gold coin and a silver dollar—are available nationwide at financial institutions, coin dealers and participating retail stores including K-Mart, Sears and Montgomery Ward.



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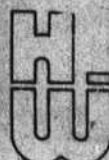
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