

SUNDAY, FEB. 5, 1950

# What Kind of Fertilizer Do You Use? Chemical or Organic?

**Battle Has Raged For Many Years**  
By MARGUERITE SMITH  
"IT DOESN'T PAY to buy fertilizer if you can get it for nothing."

That, as any long-time follower of the bean and zinnia circuit knows, is an organic gardener speaking. Now the organic and chemical fertilizer schools of gardening have been slugging it out for quite a while. The organic man says, in effect, chemical fertilizer poisons the soil. No self-respecting earthworm will live in ground that's polluted with chemical fertilizer. And he maintains that the garbage munching earthworm is a kind of city man's cattle—fine source of fertilizing manure. For the lowly earthworm (whose size makes a herd of them eminently suitable to today's pocket sized yards) loves a diet of dead weeds, grass clippings and old orange skins. And the resulting "castings" make the finest kind of topsoil.

**Clash of Ideals**  
There isn't space in one column to give all of either side of the story of chemicals versus organic. But the noise of battle is such that any plodding middle-of-the-roader who believes in piling on organic matter to keep his earthworms contented while at the same time he scatters around a little 4-12-4, just in case, can scarcely be heard. So it's unusual to find a convinced organic gardener who takes a philosophic, (but definitely not a middle of the road) view of the argument. He's J. E. McFarland, 4233 Graceland Ave. "It's a little as if the Methodists and Presby-



J. E. McFarland... he's an organic gardener.

terians suddenly went to war," he laughs. "Both good people. Both trying to get to the same place." Thereupon he goes on to deliver some well-aimed punches at the other side of the argument. "Nitrogen," he says "is one of the most plentiful fertilizers in the world. At the same time it's the most expensive to buy. Nearly three-fourths of the air is nitrogen and it's all avail-

able for plant use—free. One method—legumes will take nitrogen out of the air, get it into the soil. There are soil bacteria that will take nitrogen out of the air and combine it with carbon. But you have to provide favorable temperature and moisture so these bacteria will work for you. Can't Screen Potash "As for phosphates we have to have some return there for animals use up phosphate in

## Middle-of-Roaders Are Seldom Seen

their bodies and shortchange the soil. We can return it by turning under grains and especially cereals like rye. Rye stores up phosphoric acid until it begins to head.

Then there's potash. Ordinarily plants can take up whatever food they need from the soil and leave what they don't need. But they can't screen out potash. If there's too much, the plant stems get too stiff and fibrous, with an overbalance of starches and sugars. That makes the plant a good hunting ground for diseases. "But in the end it isn't fertilizer at all, it's water that's the limiting factor in plant growth. And that's the basis of the organic method of gardening.

## Expensive Fertilizer

"Suppose you have a garden that's all sand or gravel. The only way these rock particles can store up water is in a film of moisture around each particle. (Clay acts like a finely powdered sand.) But humus takes up water like a sponge, holding it on the inside of the particles. That's why ground with plenty of organic matter in it doesn't get waterlogged—it still has air pockets in it. "Nitrogen, the most expensive of the fertilizers is the most plentiful, and water, the limiting factor, is the second most plentiful. You can get both of them in your garden soil free by following the organic method." An interesting sidelight on Mr. McFarland's methods is his success with cuttings. An azalea cutting he stuck into a fruit jar several years ago, not only rooted but blossomed in its glass cage.

## Garden Clubs—Plans Cover Wide Field

Range From Plants To Catalogs

Garden club programs this week will range the field—from houseplants to new seed catalogs. The schedule for the week follows:

**TOMORROW**  
Rainbow Garden Club—11 a. m. Mrs. Hallie Pickhardt, 71 South St., Southport, hostess. "Houseplants." Mrs. Ralph Wilkoff. Election of officers. Mrs. Frank Schroeder, Mrs. Russell Knapp and Miss Mae Dilliner, nominating committee.

**TUESDAY**  
Biz-Z-B Garden Club—11:30 a. m. Mrs. Dan McCoy, 4017 N. Sheridan Ave., hostess. Review of year's work.

**THURSDAY**  
Rhea Garden Club—2 p. m. Mrs. George Wipple, 2705 Denison St., hostess. Discussion of new seed catalogs. Crooked Creek Garden Club—1:30 p. m. Mrs. M. L. Ober, 5205 Woodside Drive, hostess. Panel discussion: "My Favorite Flowers and Shrubs and Why I Grow Them." Leader, Mrs. Hubert Lance.

**FRIDAY**  
Golden Glow Garden Club—1 p. m. Mrs. John Lane, 1202 W. 36th St., hostess; Mrs. Orville Merrill, assistant. Round table discussion, "Successes and Failures in Growing Flowers and Plants." Mrs. James Thompson, leader.

## Queries May Be of Aid

Are you planning some new hardy flowers for your yard this season? Here are a few questions that may help you to a wiser selection.

**ONE.** Would rearrangement of already planted, but scattered, plants into a border save expending money for too many new plants this year? (Note—everybody ought to treat themselves to the fun of "something new" each year anyway, but it needn't be a lot of plants nor expensive ones.)

**TWO.** Three to five perennials in a group make a showier spot of color than a single plant. If you're a green-thumbed gardener you can save money by buying a single plant, shipping the extras this summer as your "garden accomplishment" for 1950.

**THREE.** If you're fond of flowers in the house, how will the color of those you're selecting for outdoors look with your indoor color scheme when you cut them for bouquets?

**FOUR.** Are you considering (especially if you're a new homeowner) that you'd better buy "poor soil" plants until you've had a season or two to recondition that hard subsoil around the house of your dreams?

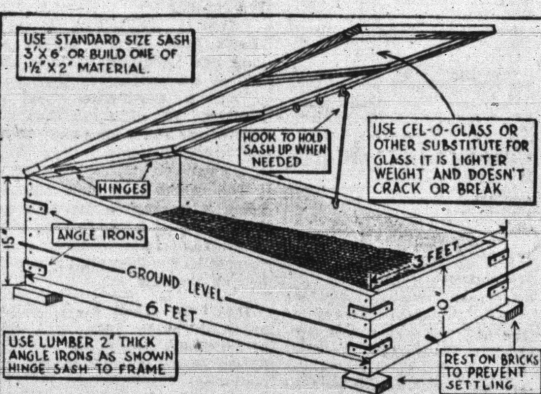
**FIVE.** Are you buying sun-loving plants for a yard that's mostly shade? (You're throwing away money if you do.)

**SIX.** Would you get a better looking yard, (for the money spent) if you used most of your yard budget for grass seed and maybe a little of that gilt-edge top soil to encourage it instead of buying so many perennials and shrubs this year?

**SEVEN.** Have you made a plan? That's one point that practically indispensable unless you want to be original at all costs—even the cost of a messy looking yard.

**Best Seed Bed**  
Vermiculite has proved to be about the best seed bed for house grown seeds. Its spongelike bulk permits air to circulate around seedling stems, prevents damping off.

## Make a Cold Frame Now



Here is a working drawing for building a cold frame. Make a cold frame now while your garden waits for spring. A frame is especially useful for a small yard. Here's an easy design. Change the size to fit your own needs. But it should slant south to catch all the sun. And it needs protection from north winds.

Use lumber such as cypress or redwood to resist decay. A plastic top, instead of glass, is light to lift. It may also transmit ultraviolet rays to the young plants.

Plan your frame for year 'round use. It's an easy way to winter over tender plants, to carry bulbs for forcing, to lengthen the vegetable season both in spring and fall. If a year 'round frame doesn't suit your needs, fasten the corners for easy break-down and storage of the disassembled parts. (By M. S.)



DISHING THE DIRT

By MARGUERITE SMITH  
Q—I have plant trouble. I have Holland hyacinths. They have been in the dark and I watered them by setting them in water until the soil was damp. Now they are up about an inch. Shall I bring them out to the light or leave until spring? Mrs. Ruth M. Boles, 612 E. 13th St.

A—If you're a beginner with forcing bulbs, leave them in the dark a while longer. Remember the old rule that the nearer the bulb's natural outdoor blooming time, the easier it is to force it successfully indoors. Time for bringing out a bulb also depends on whether you have a cool place to bring it into the light. If you do, it can come out sooner than if you have only a warm window for it. For warm air is likely to be dry air. And dry air will drink up water from the moist bud. Then the flower "blasts"—that is, dries up—instead of opening.

## Prune Your Grapes Now

In pruning grapes (this month) aim at balance between wood removed and fruiting buds left on. Too severe pruning sometimes reduces yield because it induces heavy leaf growth at the expense of fruit buds.

Cut a strong healthy vine (for example) back to four or six canes of last year's growth. Each of these canes should have eight to 12 knobby growth buds on it.

Besides pruning for fruit, leave four short spurs of two buds each so you'll have new fruiting canes growing this summer for next year's crop. Select these short spurs close to the main trunk and close to the fruiting canes you're leaving for this year.

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## Nature Club Sets Meeting

Lovers of the bird and the bee won't stand a chance of getting lazy over this coming week-end.

The Nature Study Club will have a "Blossoming Out" Saturday at 2027 E. 80th St., with games, food, speeches and music. Chairmen in charge of the various features are Patience Stom, Elva Edwards, William Myers and Albert Thomas. Dinner will be served at 5 p. m.

Audubon Society members will get together on Friday and again on Saturday. Mr. and Mrs. Joel Hadley will show pictures at the Friday night discussion meeting at Rauh Memorial Library at 7:30 p. m.

On Saturday morning (just 12 hours later) bird hikers will meet at Keystone Ave. and 59th St. at 7:30 a. m. for a field trip in Bacon swamp.

## Rose Society Schedules Meeting for Friday

Whether you're a rose fancier or just a back yard potato farmer, this week's meeting of the Indianapolis Rose Society will be worth attending.

For Harlan Fulmer, assistant county agent, is going to talk and put on a demonstration to show how soil is tested. The meeting will be at 8 p. m. Friday in Central Library.

## Butler Ivy Has History

Original Plant Brought From England

To the average sports fan who comes and goes through the gates of Butler Fieldhouse, the ivy fingering up its walls is just another plant, if it's noticed at all.

But to those who know its story, the ivied walls are a gentle reminder of two of Butler's early and beloved English teachers. Through them in turn, it links with the rich and ancient lore of Kenilworth Castle, famous in English history and literature.

For Miss Katherine Merrill, the first woman teacher on Butler's faculty brought the original ivy plant back with her from a trip to Kenilworth. Planted on the old Butler campus in Irvington, the ivy thrived on the college walls.

After the school moved to Fairview campus, Miss Merrill's niece, Miss Katherine Graydon, brought some of it to plant by the then new fieldhouse.

She lamented that the ivy wasn't too happy at first in the road-excavated subsoil around the building. But, according to Mrs. Evans Woolen Sr., who also received a slip of the richly historical ivy from her good friend, Miss Merrill, the ivy is slow to root.

Mrs. Woolen planted hers beside the chimney of the then Woolen home on Talbot Ave., across from the Art Museum. There, once it took hold, "it liked the warm chimney, soon covered it and even grew through the clapboards and into the living room, but Mr. Woolen would never have it cut down," Mrs. Woolen recalls.

Miss Corinne Welling reports the details of this interesting college lore. Miss Welling, now retired, was professor of English at Butler as were Miss Merrill and Miss Graydon in earlier years.

## GARDENING CALENDAR

IT'S TIME NOW:

- ... to watch that hardy plants don't heave out of the soil.
- ... to increase water for cactus plants as they begin to grow.
- ... to give less water to poinsettias and Christmas cacti.
- ... to spade some early garden, leaving soil rough so it will weather.

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Model 3-G Cosco DeLuxe Breakfast Bar Stool, shown in small cut at right, is ideal for kitchen, rumpus room and breakfast nook. Chrome plated with fine plastic upholstery. 24" high. Was \$9.95, now \$8.95.

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Model 3-G

## HAVE A HEART at your next party!

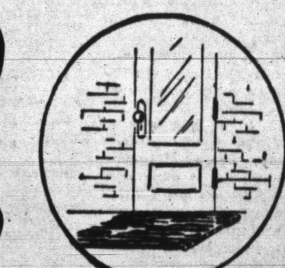
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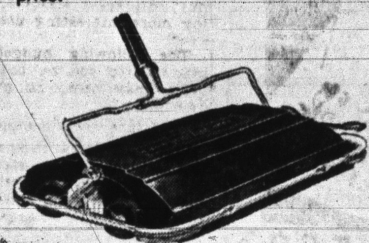
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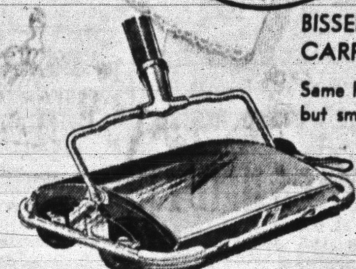
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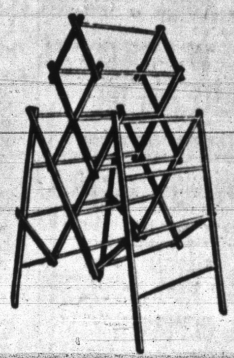
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