



Hydrangeas root readily from cuttings taken from the ends of non-flowering shoots.

which flower in summer, it is not usually practicable to cut off all the flowering shoots (as is advised for the spring-flowering jessamine, for instance), as one or two strong new shoots are likely already to have grown on some of the branches which have flowered. These new shoots may be required to keep the bush shapely and well furnished with new wood and should not be removed. *Dier-villa* (*Weigela*) spp., *Deutzias*, and mock orange are shrubs which should be pruned in this way as soon as the flowers have faded.

Hydrangeas root readily from cuttings taken from the end of new shoots, trimmed off with a sharp knife just below the bottom bud, then inserted in a cold frame and watered in. Cover the cuttings with a sheet of newspaper for a few days to shade them from the sun, and keep the atmosphere moist. Most propagators cut off the bottom two leaves close to the stem and also cut off about half of the leaves which remain.

Sawdust is proving a valuable form of mulch to apply to the soil in a layer several inches thick around rhododendrons, azaleas, and many other flowering shrubs, especially on heavy clay soil. Sawdust from *Pinus radiata* (*insignis*) is preferred, as it rots more quickly than other types. Though some gardeners use it fresh, others prefer to leave it until it goes

brown before using it. It is certainly less unsightly when it is darker in colour.

Seed saving from home-grown flowers can add interest to home gardening, though the seeds will not necessarily produce plants similar to their parents. As a general rule, especially with uncommon alpine plants, the seed pods should be collected as soon as they are ripe, put in trays for a few days to dry off completely, and then opened or crushed to liberate the seeds. The chaff should then be separated as far as possible and the seeds sown at once; many seeds which will germinate quickly if sown as soon as they are ripe will be slow in germinating if they are kept a month or two before being sown. By early sowing sturdy plants can be produced before the cold weather sets in.

Staking and tying dahlias, chrysanthemums, and other tall herbaceous perennials must not be neglected. If large blooms are required for show purposes, all flower buds but one should be removed from each stem and the plants should be fed regularly either with a topdressing of complete fertiliser or, preferably, with dilute liquid manure. If the soil is dry they should also be watered regularly, as first-class blooms can be produced only by plants which have always had sufficient water at their roots.

Moreover, topdressings of fertiliser are of no assistance to plants unless the materials are washed down into the soil and dissolved in the soil water.

Reminders About Common Troubles

Narcissus fly is a serious pest of narcissi and daffodils. The fly lays its eggs near the base of the dying leaves or in the hole which is left in the soil when the leaves die down. The young larvae work down to the bulbs, which they enter through the base, and then feed inside the bulbs, which are ruined. Cultivating the soil to keep it close to the fading leaf bases, and to close up the holes left by the leaves when they die, does much to reduce the severity of an attack by making it difficult for the young larvae to reach the bulbs. When narcissi bulbs are lifted they should never be left lying about on the soil or in trays outside, as that gives the flies an opportunity of laying their eggs directly on the bulbs. All bulbs which feel soft should be burned; they probably contain larvae of the flies.

Rose mildew commonly attacks roses, especially ramblers, growing on the side of a house or in a position where air does not circulate freely round them. A reasonable control of this disease can be obtained by dusting the plants with flowers of sulphur. An easy way of dusting is to enclose a handful of the flowers of sulphur in a piece of fine muslin, hold it near the plants, and tap the bundle smartly with a stick, when a cloud of the dust will be ejected.

Thrips, which are slender, elongated insects up to 1-10in. long and ranging from yellow to brown or black in colour, often seriously attack gladioli. The adults are winged and fly freely, but in the younger stages the insects are wingless. The insect feeds by puncturing the leaves and petals to obtain the cell sap, and in doing so produces a characteristic silver or brown, scurfy appearance on the surface of the parts attacked. If the insects feed on the flower buds, these may look "scorched" and the petals may be unnaturally streaked. Thrips are often carried over from season to season in the corms, which should be kept free from the pest while in storage by dusting them with naphthalene flakes. Careful search for thrips should be made on the developing leaves and flowers at frequent intervals during the growing season, or serious damage may be caused before it is noticed. Regular spraying with nicotine sulphate (black-leaf 40) will keep the pest in check and ensure that the blooms are not disfigured by its attacks. (Nicotine sulphate spray is made up by dissolving 2oz. of soap in a little hot water and adding it, with 1 fluid ounce of nicotine sulphate, to 4 gallons of water.)