

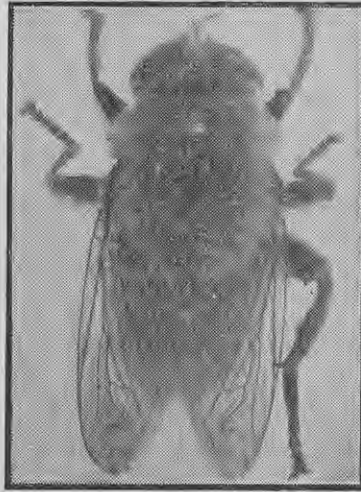
**Herbaceous plants** such as lupins, delphiniums, and dornicums should now receive attention in the earlier districts. Faded flowers and flower spikes should be cut off and the plants generally tidied up. When flowering has finished, cutting the stems back to the ground and giving a generous mulch of good compost around the plants often produces a further batch of shoots which will flower during late autumn; the second shoots should be thinned out to two or three per plant.

**Pinks** should be replanted every 2 or 3 years, because old plants produce few flowers and look untidy. Pinks can be propagated from December to February by "pipings", which are pieces 2 to 3 in. long pulled from the centres of the new shoots. These should be inserted in sand in a cold frame or in boxes with a sheet of glass over them. A sheet of newspaper should be placed over the frame or box to exclude intense sunlight. In 3 to 4 weeks the pipings will have rooted, and soon afterward they may be planted out to their flowering positions.

**Pruning** of ornamental brooms should be done as soon as they have finished flowering. Cutting into old wood is likely to be fatal. The best plan is to shorten back to within an inch or two of its base each shoot that has flowered; new shoots will grow from the stub that is left. Early-flowering heaths and deutzias should also be pruned back hard immediately after they have flowered.

**Roses** of the climbing and rambling types should have their new growths tied in before they are long enough to sway about and become damaged. Roses of all types can be budded as soon as the bark lifts readily on the stocks.

**Seed** of quite a number of herbaceous perennials which are cheaply and easily raised in the home garden may be sown during December. Among these are Russell lupins, aubrietias, anchusas, thalictrums, heucheras, and *Alyssum saxatile*. The seeds should be sown in boxes or in small open



An adult of the large narcissus fly, the larvae of which attack a wide range of flowering bulbs.

beds and the plants set out in the borders in autumn.

**Sweet peas** will be in full bloom in December, and every few days all spent flowers and developing seed pods should be removed to keep the plants blooming well. Removal of a few of the side shoots during the growing period keeps the plants open and gives adequate room for the development of long flower stalks.

#### Seasonal Pests

**Aphis** (greenfly) will again be troublesome during December on a very wide range of host plants. Nicotine sulphate sprays should be used at regular intervals to control it.

**Chrysanthemum eelworm** attack will now be showing its effect on the lower leaves of the plants. These parti-coloured, shrivelled, or dead leaves should be removed and burnt. Regular spraying with nicotine sulphate assists in preventing further migration of the eelworms.

**Narcissus flies** of the large type are a common and important pest of many flowering bulbs. They are stout, hairy insects, usually marked with red or orange bands. They lay their eggs near the bases of the leaves of bulbous plants toward the end of the bulbs' growing season. When bulbs are near the surface the flies may crawl down and lay their eggs directly on the bulbs. In either case, after the eggs have hatched, the larvae eat their way into the bulbs, which, even if they are not killed, are prevented from flowering in the following season. Affected bulbs are shrunken and soft and usually have a corky basal plate. The larvae, which are maggots, may be seen if the bulb is broken open or cut through the middle with a knife.

The larvae remain inside the bulb right through the dormant season, and this fact has a great bearing on the distribution of the pest. As the larvae are completely enclosed within the bulb, heat treatment is the only measure which is completely effective against them. It consists of immersing the bulbs for 2 hours in water which is maintained at 110 degrees F. Care should be taken not to exceed that temperature or the bulbs may be killed. This treatment should be given all new stocks of bulbs as a precaution against introducing the pest into a clean garden.

Thorough cultivation of the soil between the bulbs as soon as the foliage begins to die down, and after it has been removed if the bulbs are not lifted, fills all holes left by dying down of leaves and makes reaching the bulbs much more difficult for the flies and larvae.

### Ericas for Winter Flowers

**POPULAR** shrubs of a very large and important genus consisting of several hundred species and varieties are *Erica melanthera* (left) and *E. pyramidalis* (right). Like most ericas, these species are very free flowering and are worth a place in all plantings of shrubs, as they flower from mid-winter when other blooms are scarce. They grow most freely in a lime-free, peaty soil, rather light and well drained—similar to that which suits rhododendrons, azaleas, and kalmias.

These species appear to grow well without any special care and make a brilliant show when covered with bloom. If pruning is necessary to keep them bushy, it should be done immediately after the plants have flowered.

Selected varieties must be reproduced by cuttings, which must be firm, young side shoots  $\frac{1}{2}$  to 1 in. long, preferably taken with a heel during January, February, or March, and inserted in a close frame in a cool greenhouse. They are then transplanted to prepared beds the following spring. The potting medium recommended for raising cuttings is clean, coarse sand, plus peat that has previously grown heather if available, and this should be well watered and rammed firm.

—H. P. THOMAS, Vegetable Instructor,  
Department of Agriculture, Wanganui.

