

The Total Book of **HOUSE PLANTS**

by Russell C. Mott

More than 350 Plants in Full Color

A Complete Guide to
Indoor Gardening

THE TOTAL BOOK OF
**HOUSE
PLANTS**

by RUSSELL C. MOTT

Illustrations by
ALAN SINGER



GREENWICH HOUSE
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Additional illustrations by

Dorothea Barlowe
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Foreword

Since ancient times, house plants have brightened the homes of people throughout the world. Today, as the outdoor world of trees and shrubs and vines continues to shrink, erased by highways and parking lots and shopping centers, they are more than ever essential to the well-being and inner tranquillity of all plant lovers.

In recent decades ecologists and nurserymen, growers and biologists have worked alongside one another to augment our knowledge of cultivating and breeding indoor plants and foliage. As a result, infinite new varieties and sophisticated new techniques of culture have come into being.

It is the purpose of this volume to set forth this diversified information simply and succinctly. The range of house plants covered is worldwide, extending from orchids to cacti, from begonias to African violets. In each case all relevant information is included in the simplest form possible—mixing soils, how and when to plant, use of fertilizers, repotting and starting new plants. For closely related plants with similar culture needs, such as the many varieties of begonias or geraniums, culture requirements are given in a general article within the relevant section; for all other plants with individual culture needs, the instructions accompany the article on each species of plant. In the case of the palm family, culture requirements for all the species cited are presented in a full-page chart.

Much attention is given to dish gardens and terrariums, tropical bonsai and hanging baskets, year-round care of patio plants and home culture and forcing of flowering bulbs. Included also are formulas for soilless potting mixes and new slow-release fertilizers, along with precise instructions as to light requirements, watering and temperature needs. The botanical name, family name, common name and original habitat of each ornamental plant add to the reader's knowledge of this fascinating and rewarding hobby or avocation.



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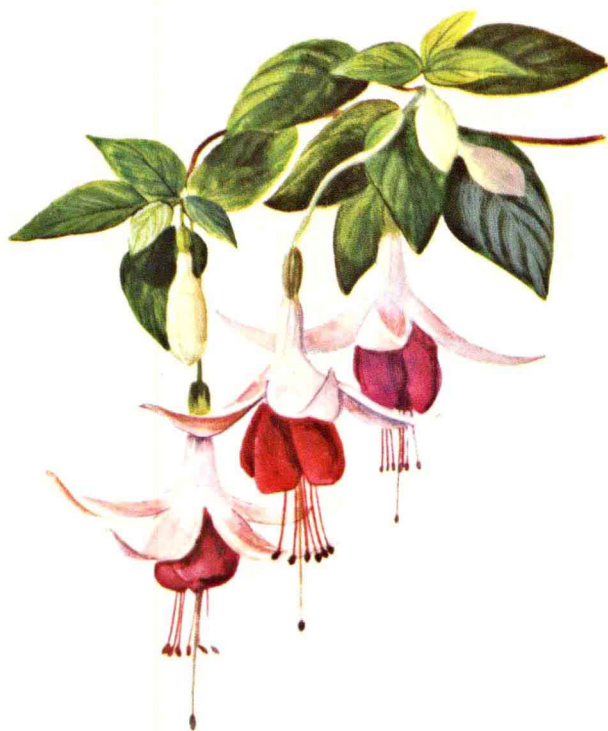
What makes this book unique in its field, beyond any other factor, is the care and time and patience that have been spent on the illustrations. Seven artists were involved, and I am grateful beyond measure to Alan Singer, who illustrated the major portion of this book. My thanks go as well to Alan's father, Arthur Singer, who illustrated the jacket, to Manabu Saito, who illustrated the cacti section, and to Elmer Smith, who illustrated the orchid section. Credit for special renderings and drawings go to Dorothea Barlowe, Enid Kotschnig and Susan Korner.

Others to whom I am grateful for their help in reading the manuscript or making special contributions to the text include Richard Peterson, editor of the American Orchid Society Bulletin, and Gordon G. Dillon, executive secretary of the American Orchid Society Inc., Botanical Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts; Dr. H. E. Moore, Jr., and Dr. Wm. J. Dress of the L. H. Bailey Hortorium, Dr. Kenneth Horst, associate professor, Plant Pathology Extension, and Dr. Raymond Fox, Department of Floriculture, all of Cornell University, Ithaca, New York.

Lastly, I am indebted to my good friend on the staff of Vineyard Books, Lucille E. Ogle, whose years of experience in the publishing field gave me guidance and encouragement in putting it all together.

R. C. M.
Ithaca, New York

*This book is dedicated to
my wife BETTY,
who shares my love
for all growing things.*





*Chrysanthemum blossoms
vary in
form and color*

HOLIDAY PLANTS

CHRYSANTHEMUM (*Chrysanthemum morifolium*) from China and *C. indicum* from China and Japan are the parents of most of the plants known to American growers as mums and in Europe and Australia as chrysanthus. They are grown as pot plants and used as cut flowers for table arrangements, bridal bouquets and for spectacular flower displays both indoors and out. Flowering can be timed by regulating the day length, making blooms possible every month.

Colors offered are white, bronze, yellow, red, maroon and lavender pink, with pastel shades of each.

Flower form is varied. There are pompons with globe-shaped, compact flowers, some with flat, fluted or quilled ray florets. Disbudded pompons measure up to five inches in diameter. The smallest button pompons in colors mainly white and yellow are less than 1½ inches across.

Single and daisy types come in all sizes and forms.

Cushion types have tiered ray florets. Their dwarf growing habit makes them fine for potting.

Anemone-flowered plants have one or more layers of ray florets and a large raised center disk.

Spider chrysanthemums have curling tubular ray florets with ends shaped like a fishhook.

Fancy are Japanese types, which are rather shaggy in appearance. There are also feathery flowers that are carnationlike with cupped or twisted ray florets.

Hardy varieties sold as pot plants can be set outdoors to give flowers again in the autumn. It is well known that not all varieties sold are hardy. Only a few varieties cultured as florists' chrysanthemums are hardy to northern latitudes (check with your florist). When flowers have faded, cut the foliage back to about four inches and, as soon as the freezing weather is gone, plant outdoors.

Plant in a sunny location with a well-drained, well-prepared bed of garden soil. Addition of a complete garden fertilizer like a 5-10-5 is desirable. In hot climates protection from afternoon sun should be considered. Well-rooted cuttings can be planted directly in the garden bed. Vigorous single-stem sections are made when dividing a clump. Use the outside of the clump, discarding the woody centers. A second and third application of fertilizer during the growing season is beneficial. However, the last application applied two to three weeks before blooming, using a low-nitrogen type, will produce better quality flowers.

Pinch top growth when stems are five to six inches high to promote lateral growth. Select from one to four for continued growth. Continue pinching all shoots reaching five to six inches. In areas of early frost pinching should cease by mid-July.

If large blooms are desired, begin disbudding when buds are large enough to handle. Remove all flower buds except one or two per flower cluster; allow these to develop.

Plants not hardy enough to live over winter can be dug up, potted and moved indoors for late fall flowering. Grow as cool as possible. Give full exposure to sun and keep potting mix moist. Cuttings are made from suckers which sprout from the base of the plant, are rooted in peat, sand or vermiculite. Pot them up, moving to larger pots as needed. The short days of winter will naturally initiate buds, and flowering may take place February or March. Grow in a room about 60° F. Give full sun days but long nights of darkness. Do not expose the plants to any light during the night if you want flowers.

Home care for lasting quality of a potted chrysanthemum is the same as for most florist flowering plants. Provide bright light but not direct sun. Keep the temperature at night at least 10 degrees lower than in the daytime. Water daily, if needed, to keep pot moist.



Lilium longiflorum

EASTER LILY or NOVEMBER LILY (*Lilium longiflorum*) This beautiful lily from Japan is a main crop for flower growers all over the warm temperate world, producing its large white flowers in spring. It is often bought just as its first flower is about to open. Other buds will then open in the home. The yellow floral parts, the male anthers, may be removed as each bud opens to prevent pollen staining the white petals.

Before 1940 most of the bulbs were grown for forcing in Bermuda and Japan. Through breeding and selection, researchers in the United States developed varieties which grew successfully in Southern states and in the Northwest. Bulbs treated for forcing are shipped to greenhouse growers by the thousands for Easter sales each year.

After flowering, the plant, which grows from a lily bulb, may be moved to a sunny garden. The survival of forced Easter-lily bulbs in a garden depends on where the bulbs were grown for forcing. Those grown in northern regions, for example, would probably survive in temperate areas, while those from southern regions may survive only in a warmer climate.

Plant outdoors when danger of freezing is past. Carefully remove bulb with soil mass and roots intact. Dig hole large enough so that the bulb will set eight to nine inches below the ground. A couple of handfuls of coarse sand or gravel at the bottom will facilitate good drainage. A tablespoonful of garden fertilizer mixed with the backfill will furnish food for continued growth. Sometimes a forced lily will bloom again in late summer. Normal blooming time is summer, but forced bulbs may need another year to build up strength for flowering. It is inadvisable to plant forced Easter-lily bulbs in the same area with garden lilies because of a chance of virus transmission.

In the home provide bright light, out of direct sun. Keep low temperature at night, check water need daily. If plant is foil-wrapped, punch holes in the foil bottom so excess water drains away.

CYCLAMEN (*Cyclamen persicum*) is a very popular winter pot plant, particularly in Europe, Australia and the United States. Most modern cultivars are sold under the name *Cyclamen persicum grandiflorum*. The typical shuttlecock-shaped flowers come in shades of pink, red, lilac, orchid-purple and white. The leaves of some cultivars are boldly patterned with silver. In table arrangements the flowers are as attractive as sweet peas. Later the same plants are sold as potted plants.

Blooming plants are available from autumn until spring, usually offered with several flowers and buds in all stages of development. The cyclamen is difficult to grow as a house plant because of its low temperature requirement.

This plant must have a cool place to survive. High day temperatures cause flower buds to wither and leaves to yellow.

Check the plant for water daily. If plant dries out, submerge the pot in water for 15 minutes.

HYDRANGEA (*Hydrangea macrophylla*) is a native of Japan, where it grows as a woody shrub about 12 feet tall. The large flower head is composed of a number of florets that are produced in late spring and early summer. The showy parts are the large sterile florets while the fertile ones are small and inconspicuous. The fertile complete flowers are hidden in the inflorescence. The color range is white, pink, red, lavender, blue and purple.

It is a plant sold in the Northern Hemisphere for Easter and other spring holidays. The flowers will last for at least six weeks.

Care in the home requires much water and as low a temperature as possible. Give bright light and no more than four hours of direct sun.

New plants may be started from cuttings in late summer.

In potting, add lime to the compost for pink varieties only; for the blue flowers the compost must be completely lime free. Use mix formula A.



Cyclamen persicum



Hydrangea macrophylla

*Primula malacoides**Calceolaria herbeohybrida*

FAIRY or BABY PRIMROSE (*Primula malacoides*) is a perennial species, but is usually grown as an annual. Flowering plants are usually found in the market early in the year and are available throughout spring. The dainty flowers range from pinks and reds to purple and white and many single and double cultivars have been raised. Since it is produced in a greenhouse, cool home temperatures are required. Keep moist in a bright window with indirect sun.

The variety Rinepearl White is grown commercially and comes in mixed colors of white, rose and carmine.

ENGLISH PRIMROSE (*Primula polyantha*), polyanthus primrose, is in flower markets from winter to spring. Usually potted in five-inch pots with fresh green leaves bearing flowers one to two inches in diameter, it comes in mixed shades of orange, red, yellow and mahogany.

This hardy species may be planted outdoors in a shady spot when frosty weather is gone. An excellent plant to combine with spring-flowering bulbs. A cool, moist climate suits them best, so this one is for northern gardeners to enjoy. Keep moist.

CALCEOLARIA (*Calceolaria herbeohybrida*) is known as "pocketbook plant." It is an old-time florist favorite and one of the most showy and interesting of all potted flowering plants. Calceolarias have coarsely toothed, soft, hairy leaves measuring to six inches long. The flowers are composed of an upper and lower lip; the lower lip is very large and inflated, more or less slipperlike. Some varieties produce flowers that are two inches in diameter and borne close to the foliage. Grown as an Easter plant, it comes in red, pink, maroon and yellow flower colors with orange, red and purple dots.

It is not suitable for areas where minimum temperatures habitually exceed 60°F.

Take care of the plant in the home as you would the primrose. Lots of water, no direct sun and as cool temperatures as possible to help it last. As a biennial, it has finished its flowering when the blooms have faded.



Senecio cruentus

CINERARIA (*Senecio cruentus* syn. *Cineraria cruenta*) is another pot plant which has low temperature culture requirements. It is a biennial and so is discarded when the flowers have faded, and new plants must be bought or grown. An inexpensive flowering pot plant, it is found in shops from late winter to spring. Numerous varieties are grown, with the colors of the daisylike flowers ranging from red and pink through mauves and purples to blue and white. Several bicolored forms are also grown.

One of the most widely grown varieties is Festival. Its compact, well-rounded growth habit combines with larger flower heads of medium-size flowers.

To keep it healthy in the home, grow it as cool as possible. It should not dry out and should be shaded from direct sunlight.

Cinerarias are excellent as container plants for patio decoration. Sow the seed in late fall for plants to set out in March. Seedlings potted in three- to four-inch pots using

mix A should be shifted gradually to avoid becoming pot-bound until they reach desired container size. Feeding every two weeks with a water-soluble fertilizer will produce vigorous flowering plants. Six- or eight-inch size pot specimens are effective when combined with begonias and other foliage plants on a terrace.

A related vine for outdoor culture in mild regions is *Senecio confusus*, or Mexican flame vine. A twining vine, needing the support of a trellis, it reaches 10 to 12 feet. It will die back to ground if subjected to a mild frost but will grow again from roots. The daisylike flowers are produced in large clusters of a startling orange-red color with golden centers. It will flower all winter where the weather is mild.

It can be grown also in a hanging basket and is effective when cascading over a wall.

Easily propagated from cuttings, this flame vine is subject to red spiders and aphids, unfortunately.