

1956-1957-1958
Cynthia

OVER THE GARDEN FENCE

by Bill Hull

...or is it "Over the Garden Gate?" Or perhaps "Through the Looking Glass?" As long as I've been writing this column, I still have moments of doubt.

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Talk about a record and someone will surely mention that Doctor Rodda is now in his new home just ninety days after the ground was first broken for the excavatio Built upon a lot originally purchased for extra lawn, the "new" home sits along side of the "old" one, so he won't be hard to locate.

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Congratulations to our new president, P. W. Young. There probably never was a president-elect who had behind him more years of loyal service to the MGCM than "P.W and that statement doesn't detract one bit from the many fine presidents we have had It will be a pleasure to serve with P.W., Harold Wright and Dwight Stone as our new officers.

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Bill Brooks, our outgoing president, will serve as presiding officer at the Christmas banquet. It is typical of Bill that he didn't want to be called "Master of Ceremonies," actually preferring no title at all. So we're simply saying Mr. Bro presiding. This will be one of Bill's last official acts before turning the presi- dency over to P.W. We certainly applaud him for his work this year and hope you will join us in thanking him as well as P.W. as outgoing Vice President, and Norm Chris- topherson as Secretary.

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"Chris" deserves special mention. He has served us as Secretary for four years He has met in about fifty Board of Directors Meetings and has performed the count- less unknown chores of his position. Chris deserves a big hand and I suggest we give him one.

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Have you gotten acquainted with our new members yet? Go out of your way to say "hello" to fellows like Dale Durst. Make them feel one of us as quickly as possible. The one outstanding danger of a large club is the ease with which we can fail to assimilate our new friends. The officers particularly are aware of this but are handicapped by other duties and segregated seating. So won't you help?

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Big Secret! Unless someone else slips and reveals the story, I have a "scoop" and can't say a word. Has to do with the new and different type of Christmas ban- quet program, December 9. The experts think you'll like it very much. If you haven't made your reservations, call Bob Adams P.D.Q.

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We're sorry to hear that Herb Kahlert has been feeling under the weather, an apparently no one knew about it. (Please, wives, let us know when your husbands are ill.) Glad to announce that Herb is feeling better now and plans to be with at our banquet.

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Here is an invitation to each of you: For a long time I've been toying with the idea of starting an informal downtown garden club. Simply a table at someplace like Donaldson's Garden Room, one regular weekly luncheon such as Wednesday or Thursday, and let members who can do so come join us. No reservations, no obligations. No business. Just a table for about 8 or 10 to chitchat gardening. Anyone interested?

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Wonderful late fall we've had. No matter how severe the winter may get, let remember the gorgeous fall of 1958. The year when practically everyone got their flowers covered and their tulips in the ground.

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Wanted: A few highly-select, promising new members. A few vacancies are existing so let's fill them with avid youthful (age alone is not the criterion) gardeners.

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For Wives and Sweethearts Only

'Tis time to get out that piece of ruled paper, sharpen your pencils and start building a Christmas shopping list for those gardening friends of yours, including hubby who might possibly head the list.

Just to freshen your memory, perhaps give you an idea or two. There are some distinct possibilities, some of which are sure to please the recipient at the same time fit your Christmas gift budget.

First, and probably the safest, are books about his specialty. "The Complete Book of Roses" by F. F. Rockwell and Esther Grayson out this month is supposed to be the "last word" on the subject. Another for the general gardener is Alfred Byrd's encyclopedia "Exotica." "Pruning Made Easy" by Edwin F. Steffek is exactly as the title implies, a truly helpful book.

How about a few interesting pieces of machinery, such as an electric hedge cutter or an electric edger. Maybe he needs a new motor driven mower or cultivator with adapter for snowplowing.

Shears of all kinds are always most welcome, particularly those on really long poles for trimming dead branches out of tall trees. Flower shears, pruning shears, grass shears, hedge shears, and the very heavy shears for cutting good size branches all make useful gifts.

A new line of sprinklers are on the market. They make the water do most everything but spoon feed the plants. If you have a fairly large lawn, a walking sprinkler does save a lot of fuss and bother having to continually move sprinklers around without forgetting the area already watered. With the hundreds of different kinds of sprinklers

Takes some hose to go with that sprinkler. You have a wide choice here, all colors, many kinds of material and whatever length is required for the distance you have to cover.

If you really want to make a hit, send away for a SOAKEZ. My son sent me one for my birthday, and I have since bought another. It's a plastic hose that will wa very slowly five shrubs at one time. Can leave them on all day without wasting any water. I wouldn't be without one in each of the back and front yards. Sold by mail only through Jons Mfg. Co., Saint Matthews, South Carolina. Complete postpaid: \$5.

If he has all the hose he needs and hasn't run over any of it with the lawnmow consider couplings. You can buy snap on and off couplings that does away with that tedious job of making threads mesh. They come in chrome, aluminum and solid brass, a real patience saver. A watering wand is another useful watering gadget and so is a root feeder.

Look these over for Christmas gifts: wheelbarrows, garden carts, lawnsweeper for picking up grass clippings or leaves; fertilizer or grass seed spreader, lawn roller or aereator; power sprayers or dusters and tools of every description.

Maybe one of those new plastic greenhouses would bring you next year a mink co or a sable wrap. How do you know, until you try? If his tools get in the way of g ting the car in and out of the garage, why not build him a tool shed or workshop.

Almost forgot the birds. You can't have too many good looking, practical bird feeders around the place nor too much feed -- does that give you an idea?

Then there's the Christmas stocking. Lots of gardener's delights can be cram- med into those. Such things as plant labels, marking pencils, green thumb gloves, small plant stakes, twistems, small shears for cutting flowers, garden cap, hand sprinklers, hose washers, seeds of his favorite flowers or vegetables, gladiola bulbs, garden diary, spraying or dusting chart, subscription to one of his garden magazines, or a gift certificate from a local nursery for a special plant, rose, shrub or tree.

DUES ARE DUE

It's that time again! Mail your check for \$4.50 to William H. Hull, Room 403, Essex Building, Minneapolis 3. Do it now while it's on your mind, then the Treasurer will be sure to get your name on the 1959 roster.

WE SALUTE OUR 1959 OFFICERS

Unanimously elected by the membership at our November Meeting to take office January 1, 1959, we extend our sincere congratulations to:

P.W. Young	President
William H. Hull	Vice President
Dwight Stone	Treasurer
Harold Wright	Secretary

DESCRIPTION AND USES OF PEAT MOSS

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Peat Moss and pure Sphagnum have many uses as a seeding and growing media. The advantages of peat in soil mixes to assure good physical properties widely known to the grower. Recently, the use of organic materials for soil improving purposes has increased quite markedly and continued increases are anticipated.

Definition of peat moss

Peat moss is the poorly decomposed remains from stems and leaves of several species of Sphagnum mosses. Usually it is at least partly disintegrated (leaves off the stems).

Pure Sphagnum moss is the undecomposed live or freshly preserved remains of several species of Sphagnum mosses. It is not disintegrated.

Species of Sphagnum

There are two general types of Sphagnum mosses. They are as follows:

- 1) Thin type. These contain many thin leaves on long, narrow stems, Sphagnum fuscum and S. cuspidatum are the principal species. These species are highly water absorbent.
- 2) Thick type (robust). These contain thick leaves and stems and form a thick rosette at the terminal end of the stem. Sphagnum nedium and S. magellanicum are examples. These species are also very absorbent but less so than the thin types.

Distribution of Sphagnum moss

Sphagnum mosses are found in the cool, humid climates of the world. Cool summers, low evaporation, high humidity and general moist conditions are conducive to their growth. In North America the distribution coincides with the belt of northern coniferous forests. The mosses produce their own acidity and tolerate wet conditions not suitable for other bog plants.

Characteristics of Sphagnum Moss

Sphagnum moss plants contain no roots. They grow upon the dead remains of other bog mosses and plants and form hummocks, swales and colonies (clumps) of moss on these remains as they extend upward from the surface of the bog.

The following morphological features are common:

- 1) Light tan or yellow-brown when squeezed dry.
- 2) Porous fibrous or spongy fibrous texture.
- 3) Quite elastic when dry.
- 4) Light in weight.
- 5) Leafy rosette forms on stems.
- 6) Readily absorbs water.
- 7) Contains transparent hyaline cells which act as storage compartments when water is absorbed. This unique feature accounts for the large water-absorbing power of moss.

Physical Properties

Sphagnum moss has several important physical properties which distinguish it. These are as follows:

- 1) Very low volume weight - 0.2 to 0.3 cc/gm.
- 2) Very high water-holding capacity - 1000-3000 percent or absorbs 10-30 times its own weight in water.
- 3) High content of organic matter - 99 percent pure organic matter.
- 4) Well preserved plant remains - slightly decomposed. Original structure evident.
- 5) Plant remains easily identifiable because of fresh condition of preservation.

(cont.)

Chemical properties

Chemical analyses of Sphagnum moss show some very unique properties as follows:

- 1) Very acid reaction - pH of 3.0 to 4.5.
- 2) Practically undecomposed. Only very slightly soluble in organic solvents.
- 3) Low nutrient content - nitrogen content moderate - 0.8 to 1.5% - phosphorus and potassium content only a trace.
- 4) Carbon to nitrogen ratio very high.
- 5) Cellulose content very high.
- 3) Growth medium for acid-loving shrubs, such as azaleas and rhododendrons.
- 4) Medium for propagating orchids.
- 5) An ingredient of soil mixes for potted plant.
- 6) For mulches.
- 7) A transplanting medium.
- 8) For improving general physical condition of soils.

This means the Sphagnum moss will be easily decomposed by microorganisms when mixed with soil. The nitrogen, however, will not be readily available as the organisms tie it up in the decomposition process.

Uses of Peat Moss

The advantages of peat moss as a soil improver are many. The moss acts in the following ways:

- 1) Provides organic matter for fine-textured soils.
- 2) Improves moisture-holding capacity of coarse soils.
- 3) Adds bulk to soil mix, thereby increasing porosity and aerating soil.
- 4) Is excellent growing medium for plants in flats because of its physical nature.

The various horticultural uses for peat moss include the following:

- 1) Medium for germinating seeds in flats.
- 2) Peat moss medium for softwood cuttings.

Among the advantages of moss peat manure or other nature soil improves are that it is free of weed seeds and disease and has no offensive odor. It also is very light and easy for work with.

It has been generally assumed that the imported Sphagnum peat moss is superior in quality to the domestic product. This is not the case for several reasons:

(1) The species are identical, (2) the methods of harvesting are the same, and (3) the deposits contain the same kind of extraneous plant material. In practice however, the uniform quality of the imported peat is due to grading and not to a superior, raw material. The Minnesota deposits are identical in nature to the European and Canadian deposits but the producers have not provided a uniform product.

The commercial value of peat moss depends upon its moisture content, its capacity to absorb water and the amount of actual organic matter which it contains. Standardization of commercial peat products would be desirable for the peat moss industry in Minnesota and would result in a high-quality product with a uniform condition.

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