Plants for Your Room

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Recommended Citation
Schneider, Donna (1957) "Plants for Your Room," The Iowa Homemaker: Vol. 36 : No. 15 , Article 9.
Available at: http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/homemaker/vol36/iss15/9
Plants for your room

WHY WAIT for spring when you can bring it into your room now, with blooms and greenery grown by you? No cold campus winds will daunt a cheery pot of crocus or ivy, and what morale boosters they are during winter’s lagging days!

Bobbie Glass, a senior in horticulture, offered some pointers to prospective winter gardeners who think they possess “all thumbs” instead of “green thumbs.” “Do it the easy way,” she said. “Let the florist force the bulb and pot it; then all you do is sit back and wait for it to bloom.”

Must Force Bulbs

Ordinary spring-blooming bulbs won’t bloom even in a warm room during the winter because they are in a dormant state. But for gardeners who catch spring fever in mid-winter, Holland bulb raisers give bulbs a cold storage treatment to force the plants to bloom early. After the bulbs arrive at the greenhouse they are potted and raised to the “just-about-to-bloom” stage.

Potted bulbs that can be grown in the winter include the fragile white, yellow or blue crocus, the fragrant “Paper White” Narcissus and the blue, pink or white hyacinth, which produces masses of blooms. The appearance of the blossom is the swan song for winter bulbs. They bloom only once and never regain their strength. But the plants can be kept vigorous before blooming with a minimum of care.

Bobby said the bulbs require no repotting or added plant food. “They’ll bloom best in sunlight,” she said, “but don’t put them in the window or you may freeze them.” All the plants need is an occasional watering. The soil shouldn’t be kept damp to the touch nor completely dry.

For the adventurous souls who want to grow their own flowers from bulb blossom, Bobbie suggested “Paper White” Narcissus. The bulbs should be completely covered with soil and watered regularly.

Grow Bulbs In Water

The bulbs can also be grown in water. If supported by small pebbles and watered occasionally they will grow as well as plants in soil. Bobbie said that whether planted in water or soil, the bulbs take approximately six weeks to bloom.

For greenery with a longer life expectancy than bulb plants, you can choose from a multitude of foliage plants. Most common are the easy-to-grow with glossy, heart-shaped leaves; Sansevaria, a tall, spiked plant; the familiar ivy and Variegated Pothos.

Ivy is Temperamental

Ivy can be rather temperamental, said Bobbie. It attracts red spiders, which cause the ivy to dry up and wither. You’ll avoid these pests by washing the leaves under a faucet once a week. Any foliage plant will have glossier leaves after a weekly bath, but you can add an extra shine with a commercial leaf wax. Bobbie warned against using mineral oil to add the gloss. “Mineral oil closes the pores of the leaves so the plant can’t breathe,” she said.

Any plants, whether bulb or foliage plants, need drainage space at the bottom. Bobbie suggested putting crushed charcoal in the bottom of the planter if it has no drainage hole. Although less effective, crushed rock or pieces of broken pottery may be used.