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GERANIUMS — Floral Beauty with a "Camel" Touch

By B. GILES

THERE are about 30 different kinds of ivy geraniums alone which a geranium enthusiast can collect.

You can get a wide range of colours from white to deep red for the popular geranium fence, hanging baskets, patio pots or window boxes.

You can buy them from expert growers in Perth, Eastern States nurseries, or, probably best of all, exchange with fellow members at a C.W.A. meeting or buy them at a church fete. For some of the best and most unusual of geraniums have kept on keeping on in country gardens.

Named varieties are difficult to identify because their colours appear different at night and often the difference between two varieties is not apparent until you have them side by side.

Ivy geraniums lend themselves to pleasantly arty effects in the garden. Like painting an old wheelbarrow white or pale pink, filling it with a good layer of gravel and ash and then firm soil mixed with compost and planting half a dozen different varieties in the barrow. You can wheel it from place to place or on to patio or verandah to show off or control sunlight and shade.

You can do the same with an old sulky or trap or spring cart (without taking it indoors or on the verandah) and have a great riot of ivy geraniums mixed with petunias and periwinkle.

One of the more attractive things about geraniums is that they have a camel touch, going for days and even weeks without water, and do not demand too exact care. And they also endear themselves to the housewife who can’t bear flies for you don’t have to feed them a lot of animal manure.

Soil Preparation

Compost and loam mixed make a good geranium soil, and you can have compost without flies.

For a good mix of compost you need plenty of “organic waste matter,” ground limestone, superphosphate, and sulphate of ammonia. The organic waste matter is nowadays mostly lawn clippings, garden weeds, old leaves, vegetable cuttings from the vegetable garden and the kitchen, dead flowers, straw, animal and fowl manure. Even old paper, if it is wet, or cardboard or old rotted super bags can go into the heap.

Make a pile of your assembled “organic matter,” and mix in about 5 lb. of lime to 100 lb. of material. Sprinkle superphosphate and sulphate of ammonia (about 1 lb. to the 100 lb.) over it. Mix well. Moisten this layer. Bacterial accelerator added at this stage will hasten decomposition.

If the layer is sprayed with a good maggot killer such as malathion, diazonon or dipterex, the possibility of fly infestation is limited. After spraying, cover it with a two-inch layer of moist sand.

Go on building your heap this way, watching for traces of fly breeding which you can control with maggot killer. It is better to spray the compost heap than the house.

It is the thin layer of animal or fowl manure spread through like filling in a layer cake which gives the flies the best breeding conditions. The fly cannot burrow down to lay its eggs but it can burrow
a long way up if the eggs are already laid in a layer of manure.

Rovolling? Not as revolting as flies on the real layer cake.

Here are a few ivy geraniums you might have or collect.

LA FRANCE: Lilac flower, heavily splashed with crimson.

ABEL CARRIERE: The old purple-cerise ivy geranium, fully double.

L'ELEGANTE (also called elegance): The most attractive ivy for indoors and one of the few coloured leaf varieties. The leaves are small and neat, greyish green and edged with white which turns mauve to pink in the sun. Does well in a poor old soil. Does not need heavy watering.

MADAME CROUSSE: The most popular fully double flesh pink variety.

CALILEE: A popular old variety of rose pink.

JESTER: Double, large rose-mauve flecked and feathered flower.

JEANNE D'ARC: Single flowered white, veined with pale lilac. There is also a Double Jeanne d'Arc.

VICAR OF JERSEY: Light fuchsia colour with carmine centre, with a heavily zoned leaf which tends to colour attractively.


MLLE. CACHIN: Double blush white ivy, lined with pale lilac.

MAUVE BEAUTY: Bluish purple with dark flecks, blooms reminiscent of those of a rambling rose.

MAUVE GEM: Double, rose-like flower, shading from heliotrope at the centre to near white.

L'ETINCELANTE: Fully double, rosebud-like flowers before fully opened, of a brilliant deep rose red.

DUKE OF EDINBURGH (also called Sunset): Large, showy leaf with a creamy, irregular margin and pale pink flowers.

CEOCODILE: Shiny green leaves veined with cream in a lacy pattern, with pale pink flowers.

MEXICAN BEAUTY: Deep velvety red single flowered.

PINK CARNATION: Brilliant pink with a petal serrated like a carnation.

BRIDGET O'FLYNN: Huge double dark red.

ANTOINE CROZY: Double bright red. A powerful grower.

ALICE CROUSSE: Double deep magenta.

CHEETAH: Semi-double, rosy purple.

SIR PERCY BLAKENEY: Rich double crimson-scarlet ivy.