

A New Idea . . .**DRESS UP THE DOORS!**

Although door decorations for spring and summer may never quite gain the popularity of their autumn and Christmas counterparts, they steadily climb sales charts. Each year, as more families adorn their front doors with summery decorations, a subtle bit of keeping-up-with-the-Joneses pressure is experienced by surrounding neighbors. Each of these neighbors might be inspired to make a quick trip to the flower shop. Florists should offer an impressive variety of doorpieces perfectly suited for adding a touch of summer decor to any front door.

Most florists find summer doorpieces enjoyable to make. Perhaps this is because they are usually novel items in many shops, making most design ideas seem fresh and appealing, whereas repetition and creative burnout may soon overtake the designer making autumn and Christmas wreaths, simply because of the sheer numbers they may be required to produce. Following are some ideas to activate your creative energies to conceive a first-class display of summer doorpieces.

The straw wreath is traditionally popular in the autumn and can be adapted nicely for the summer door. Place polyester silk flowers in loose clusters on the wreath for a light, summertime feeling. By adding moss, foliage and twigs to the flower clusters, an attractive "planted" look can be achieved. The grouping will appear to be growing directly from the straw.

Selection of polyester silk flowers is important to capture the appropriate seasonal feeling. Look to the traditional spring and summer blossoms for your designs. Lavender hues provide a wide array of possibilities, including violets, pansies, irises, lilacs and wisterias. Red tones provide petunias, strawberries, sweet Williams and that all-time favorite geraniums. Select from marigolds, calendulas, zinnias, poppies and black-eyed Susans for yellow-and-orange combinations. For pink-toned designs, look for peonies, sweetpeas, larkspurs and dianthus.

Grapevine wreaths also can be adapted for summer doorpieces. Thick wreaths can be broken down to produce two or three lighter summer designs. Simply break the wreaths apart and reglue into slender circles. Weave flower blossoms and foliage through the vines in a knot

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STREPTOCARPUS

"Concorde" is a new introduction among the various varieties of streptocarpus which are available. It is a new strain, an F₁ hybrid!

Concorde available in a variety of colors is very uniform, flowers from seed in four months, more compact, can be programmed by manipulating sowing dates and will become one of the major house plants.

Seed companies have provided some important cultural information for Concorde. This you will find below.

CULTURAL INFORMATION

Sowing Date: The period between sowing and flowering varies with the time of year. Allow 4-5 months from a spring sowing, and 5-6 months for overwintered crops.

Seed Sowing: Broadcast thinly on the surface of moist compost. Do not cover the seed. Germinate at 24°C (75°F). Avoid drying out and direct sunlight.

Pricking Out: Normally 3-4 weeks after sowing. Young seedlings, characterized by their prominent single leaf, should be pricked out into Jiffy 7's Vacapac or similar containers. Do not use individual peat pots i.e., Jiffy Strips. Grow on at 18° - 21°C (65° - 70°F) in the early stages. Later lower this to 16° - 18°C (60° - 65°F). Young plants should be kept moist but not wet. As with other Gesneriads, leaf scorch can occur if watered over-

head (or sprayed) in bright sunlight. Shading is desirable.

Young plants appear to grow slowly and can be left in their propagation units until the first signs of flower buds appear. Apart from the obvious economy this offers, it also serves to reduce leaf growth. Plants can then flower in as little as four weeks from final potting depending on the time of year.

Potting: Excellent results have been obtained using low nitrogen peat based compost. Continental 11cm pots are ideal. Spacing of 6-8" square has given good results. Shade from bright sunlight.

Growing On: The art of producing a quality streptocarpus is to get the maximum number of flowers from the minimum leaf area. After potting, you will be able to exercise most control over this in the following ways:

Temperature: A minimum night temperature of 16° - 18°C (60° - 65°F) gives good results. 21°C (70°F) is too high and leads to excessive leaf growth.

Water: Plants should be moist but not wet. Avoid heavy watering until roots have filled the pot.

Feeding: Regular feeding with a low nitrogen liquid feed has proved advantageous.

Ralph Freeman

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