



Potted Plants

NOW that autumn has put an end to outdoor gardening for a while, the little indoor gardens which we keep in flower pots come in for increased attention. They may range all the way from the scores of thriving plants kept by fine old-fashioned housewives to the single struggling rubber tree of a crowded city apartment, but no one who likes a few green leaves and a flower or two need be left quite in a winter desert.

The conventional flower pot has been found, through many generations of use, to be best suited for growing plants indoors. A few hints may be useful, however, to make sure of their proper management.

In the first place, the pot should be large enough for the plant that is to grow in it. It is to be remembered that most plants spread their roots at least as far as they spread their branches, and farther. Even a seemingly big pot, therefore, is close quarters for a plant, and the deficiency will have to be made up to the crowded roots by ample water and rich earth.

But not too much water, and neither too much nor too little earth. If you fill the pot too full, you will be washing part of it over the rim, or slopping water over, and in any case you will be encouraging a heap of dry dust to form above the level of the edge. If you put in too little, the natural settling of the soil will bind the roots down into the narrow end of the pot, in half the space they were intended to have; and of course the less earth in the pot the lower is the fertilizer supply available for the plant and the more likely one is to over-water and turn the soil into a mass of bricky mud. There is a happy medium: one finger-width (that excellent flexible old unit of measurement!) below the rim of the pot.

Science News Letter, November 28, 1931

MEDICINE

Bendien Cancer Test Called Unreliable

THE BENDIEN TEST for cancer is still being investigated by leading British laboratories in the hope that a reliable method of early diagnosis may be available to the medical profession, although Sir C. Gordon Watson, chairman of the Investigation Committee of the British Empire Cancer Campaign, has just poured cold water on these hopes. The proposed test was devised by Dr. S. G. T. Bendien of Zeist, Holland. It is not at present being applied clinically and the scientists working on it stress particularly the fact that it is not in any sense a cure or a treatment of cancer.

Sir Gordon Watson's opinion is that "although the preliminary results were encouraging, subsequent inquiries have failed to justify the early promise, and Bendien's method of diagnosis for malignant disease cannot at the present time be accepted as reliable."

Two Parts

Dr. Bendien's test consists of two parts, one chemical and the other spectroscopic. In the chemical test twenty tubes containing equal amounts of serum are treated with sodium vanadate in acetic acid solution of varying strength and hydrogen ion concentration, and the turbidity or flocculation produced is carefully noted. With normal serum the flocculation begins in the sixth tube. With serum from patients suffering from cancer, tuberculosis and one or two other diseases, flocculation takes place in earlier tubes. To distinguish between those ailments, Dr. Bendien dissolves the precipitate from the chemical test in a two per cent. sodium bicarbonate solution and measures, by means of a spectrograph, its power to absorb ultraviolet light. This "absorption spectrum" is stated to differ according to the type of ailment, and Dr. Bendien claims that he can in this way distinguish cancer from the other diseases which behave in the same manner towards the chemical test.

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