

# For the gardener

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are published every year in this idiom, the majority in Germany of course, but several thousand also in Switzerland and Austria. Out of this colossal annual production of 30,000 new books some 5,000 are selected either for purchase or for being taken in commission. Those of the latter category can, if they sell badly, be returned to the publishers within one year. Legally the Book Centre is, as I have mentioned, the property of a Co-operative Society of 220 book sellers. But this does not mean that it only serves them. In fact there are some 800 bookshops all over the country which can and do avail themselves of the Book Centre's services, the annual turnover of which reaches about 50 million francs.

In order to sell books not only in bookshops and railway station stalls, but also in the many new enormous shopping centres which have sprung up (Spreitenbach, Uster, Regensdorf, Emmen, Solothurn) two new limited companies have been formed: namely Book Holding Ltd and Book Shopping Ltd, both of them subsidiaries of the Book Centre. One of the functions of this enterprise is, incidentally, also to send Swiss books to some 1,500 bookshops abroad and thus to contribute, as it were, to what might be termed "cultural export". If the Book Centre only stocks German language volumes, this does not mean that it will not also obtain and deliver books in other languages to any of its 800 client-bookshops. It is, one may add, an example of extremely successful self-help by an important retail trade.

## FOR THE GARDENER

### *The Geranium*

The plant which bears this name, is one of our best bedding plants, ideally suited to window boxes or the garden. It is a strong plant, often valued as much for its foliage as its bright flowers, which come in many colours from white to scarlet.

The common name for the geranium family is cranesbill. Botanists would say that the cranesbill tribe has approximately 250 members, most of them growing in temperate areas, only a few come from the tropics. They are called cranesbill because the long, slim seed capsules could be said to look like the bill of a crane or heron. Even the name geranium can be misleading, it should be applied to these cranesbills, not to the plants we usually grow in our homes, which should all really be called pelargoniums.

The bedding geranium and the regal pelargoniums (a very attractive plant more often kept as a house plant), originally came from South Africa, and were introduced into this country in 1700. Plant hybridizers have worked on them, and given us an array of colours and forms. A typical geranium is the red Paul Cromptel type, and the ivy-leaved forms are very good for hanging baskets.

The best way to propagate geraniums is to take cuttings. The usual time to root these cuttings is in August and September. Side shoots of the geranium give the best cuttings, they should be approximately six inches long, and must not be too soft or sappy.

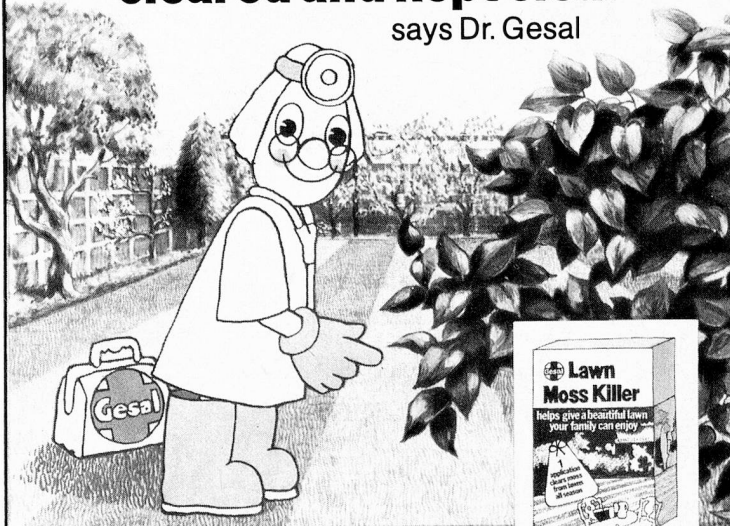
After the cutting has been removed from the parent plant, a neat, clean cut is made immediately below a leaf joint. The cutting should be trimmed leaving a couple of leaves, but all bracts must be removed or they may rot. Never take geranium cuttings which look diseased, deformed or weak. Cuttings should be put into a flower pot which contains a compost of John Innes Base No 1 in the proportion of 7 loam, three peat, three sand. The compost must be well firmed in. A hole is made down the side of the pot, so approximately half the cutting is submerged, it is important the cutting is resting at the bottom of the hole. All cuttings are watered in, and kept in a temperature of 45-50 degrees Fahrenheit. The cuttings should be shaded till they have rooted, if they are kept under glass. Once the cuttings have rooted and established, they should be potted up and grown for planting out at the end of May.

Finally, to show how much the geranium family can diversify, it contains herbaceous plants, to those grown in rock gardens. An example of a herbaceous plant is the geranium sanguineum, which has attractive blue flowers. The rock garden plants are mostly native to Europe, one of many such plants is geranium argenteum which has rose-pink flowers and bright silver lobed leaves.

Penelope J. Jetzer

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GERANIUM