

Mary's cache

By MARY AMBROSE

It's not too late to start planning your home garden. Remember a well-planned garden is always a success. Planning a variety of color, checking types of soil, and selecting heights are very important.

Because the summer season is so short, many plants should be started indoors.

Use a shallow wooden box, about 3/4-inch deep. For those of you who don't use the pre-packed plant soil, sterilize your soil before planting the seeds to be on the safe side.

Last summer an acquaintance of mine in Fairbanks lost most of his early started plants to maggots. So, take precautions by baking the soil to be used in 180-degree oven for one hour and let it stand overnight before planting. Lay flower seeds 1/8-inch under the starting material. To prevent seeds from washing up, place an old newspaper on the surface of freshly planted seeds before watering.

Here are some well-known flowers that grow exceptionally well in Alaska. Snapdragon, Pot Marigold, Delphinium (Larkspur), Sweet William, Butterfly flower (Poor Man's Orchid), Sweet Alyssum, and Labelia.

The Labelia is adapted very well to the conditions throughout Alaska, but should be set at least ten weeks before transplanting. Moss and vegetation should be removed from new garden site on soils that have not been cultivated before.

In most Northern areas underlying permafrost makes it very cold and allows no drainage. So, by exposing the new garden site as early as possible the permafrost will begin to melt. Dig trenches about three feet apart to allow water to drain toward lower land. You can also build up plant beds to increase soil temperature. This will surely promote an earlier harvest.

Dig you later!