

No 20 000
11/17/74

L-1474



**Smart
On
Sales**



TEXAS AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICE
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
THE TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY SYSTEM
COLLEGE STATION, TEXAS 77843

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TEXAS AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICE

THE TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

S.O.S. Shopper:

For smooth "sailing" this month, I hope this "SOS-Smart on Sales" letter on plants and gardening equipment will help you find big savings. Other sales to watch for this month include luggage, clothing and children's shoes.

This letter series and other educational programs are provided at no charge by the Texas Agricultural Extension Service. Extension publications are available from my office to give you shopping guides for other items you may find on sale this month. If you would like to receive any of these bulletins or know more about other Extension programs, contact me.

Happy Sales!

County Extension Agent



GARDENING GEAR

The careful shopper can find good buys by shopping nursery and garden store ads on a year-round basis. These merchandisers are great believers in using single item sales as attention getters to bring the potential customer into the store.

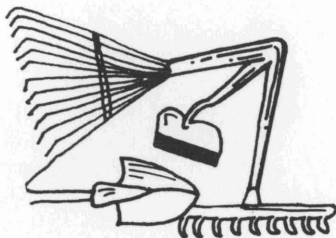
Due to the perishable nature of plant materials, most garden centers and nurseries work out of the supplier's inventory. They depend more on sales promotion of certain surplus items throughout the year rather than a big close-out sale at a certain season.

Many of the large department store and chain store companies with garden supply departments will have pre-season sales on equipment and fertilizer in January and February and a close-out sale in late spring. There are seldom any bargains in plants at this time because a limited variety is left for selection, the quality and condition has deteriorated, and the bedding plants are overgrown or woody and hard from lack of water.

Late summer sales in many department store garden sections promote lawn and garden equipment to make room for Christmas items. Such things as garden hose, sprinklers, mowers and edgers are marked down at this time. Be wary of power tools that appear to be extra low in price as these are frequently a special purchase of inferior quality for promotional purposes. Quality merchandise is seldom marked down drastically and poor quality merchandise is no bargain at any price.



The shopper must be extremely cautious in purchasing bare root plants on sale at this time. Watch for shriveled branches and dried up buds. If the twigs and branches snap like a match stick, the plant is probably dead. The twigs should be pliable, the buds should be plump and firm and the packing material around the roots should still be moist. Avoid bare rooted and root wrapped plants that have an abundance of new green shoots and leaves. The food reserves and moisture in these dormant plants have been expended and the plants will have little chance for survival when placed in the landscape. Container plants can be a good buy anytime they are on sale, but only if you happen to have a need for them and they haven't suffered from lack of care. They will require more care if moved into the landscape in late spring or summer.

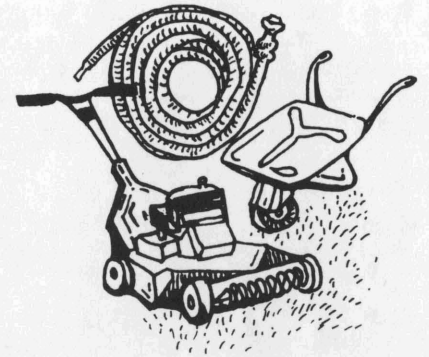


Tools and equipment can offer some good buys at this time if you happen to need the merchandise. Too often the impulse is to buy an item on sale whether you need it or not. It takes an alert eye and an analyzing mind to get a bargain at plant material and supply sales.

When buying garden tools of any kind, remember that these are usually used for many years and the cost per year of use is rather low. A few pennies saved by buying the low end of the line can sometimes be rather expensive if the tool does not meet the use for which it was intended. Tools with wooden handles should be designed so the handles can be easily replaced, yet so firmly attached that they will not come loose when used. The wood in the handles should be straight grained with no rough spots or knots showing.



Fertilizer is frequently used as a come-on in garden supply sales. Just because it is marked as fertilizer and has a low price does not mean it is a good buy. Judge fertilizer by the analysis printed on the bag. It usually consists of three numbers on the label, separated by dashes such as 6-10-4, 21-0-0, 16-20-0, 12-12-12, etc. The first number always indicates the percentage of nitrogen; the second is the percentage of phosphorus as P_2O_5 ; and the third tells the buyer the percentage of potassium as K_2O . Every container of material sold as fertilizer must have this information available. Sometimes a fourth number is given for the sulfur content. Percentage simply means that there are that many pounds of a particular nutrient in 100 pounds of total fertilizer. The remainder of the material is a non-nutrient material that frequently has soil conditioning benefits.



Prepared by Extension landscape horticulturists, The Texas A&M University System.

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