

Indoor Green Thumbs

To give you a boost when only the tips of bulbs are showing outside it is good to have blooms indoors. One of the choices for indoor culture is the bougainvillea, which surprises me since I associate them with tall tropical pergolas. However, there are varieties that grow one to two feet tall in a container and bloom nearly year 'round. They are truly vines but can be grown in a hanging basket or trained as a standard.

This tropical plant has miniature white flowers in a whirl of richly colored papery bracts, not merely in the pink to purple shades but some are found in yellow. *B. California Gold*' is a freely flowering yellow and

b. 'Delta Dawn' has clusters of yellow against cream and green variegated foliage.

These zone 9 and 20 plants can be moved outside for the warm months. Inside they respond to the stress of allowing them to become dry before watering them by abundant bloom. Unlike most bougainvilleas the cultivar *B. 'Tom Thumb'* is not a vine but a compact shrub.

Clerodendron, which is familiar to us as *C. trichotomum*, or Glory Bower, a great ungainly shrub blessed with fall white flowers of a heady fragrance followed by bright blue berries, has an indoor cousin, *C. paniculata*, which blooms in summer with a lavish display of orange flowers in tall spires. The plant needs space as it matures at three to four feet in height. Clerodendron has other relatives happy to bloom all winter in your sunny window.

Clerodendron bungei has clusters of rose-pink fragrant flowers and as a zone 7 plant it is hard outside. As an indoor plant it keeps its leaves and flowers most of the year. More information about these dazzling gloom chasers can be found at www.logees.com. The website will introduce you to varieties of many unexpected houseplant species.

Go Wild!

If you have a spot in your garden that is blessed with winter sun and summer shade it can become an easy-to-care for wildflower garden. They won't mind if you don't get all the fallen branches cleared away! These early spring gifts are often referred to as ephemerals, from the Greek for short lived! Indeed, some of them last no longer than teen fads.

Most of us tend to want a plant to bloom forever once we go to the trouble of inviting it into our gardens. The only flowers that do that are the plastic ones unfortunately. One of the loveliest of these wildflowers is the Easter trout lily with small recurved petals on slender stems, rising from a pair of broad green and brown mottled leaves. Erthronium Americanum is also called dog-tooth violet for reasons that escape me. It is a member of

the lily family, which means it is not vole proof. I still miss the few I had for they were truly exquisite.

Equally lovely is the Atamasco lily, which is vole proof as it belongs to the Amaryllis family, as do narcissus. *Zephyranthes atamasco* survives wet soil in winter and has a fragrant white flower in May. The foliage lasts through summer so needs some sun and moisture. Other charmers are *Mertensia virginica*, Virginia bluebell, Giant Trillium and *Doronicum* which is an early yellow daisy or Leopard's Bane.

Cardamines (toothworts) and Wood Anemones are also worth searching for. These are the gentle plants that keep you company during those early outside chores before the burst of spring color. Wildflowers are protected from illegal gathering so must be obtained from a nursery that states theirs were nursery propagated.