

# the pits

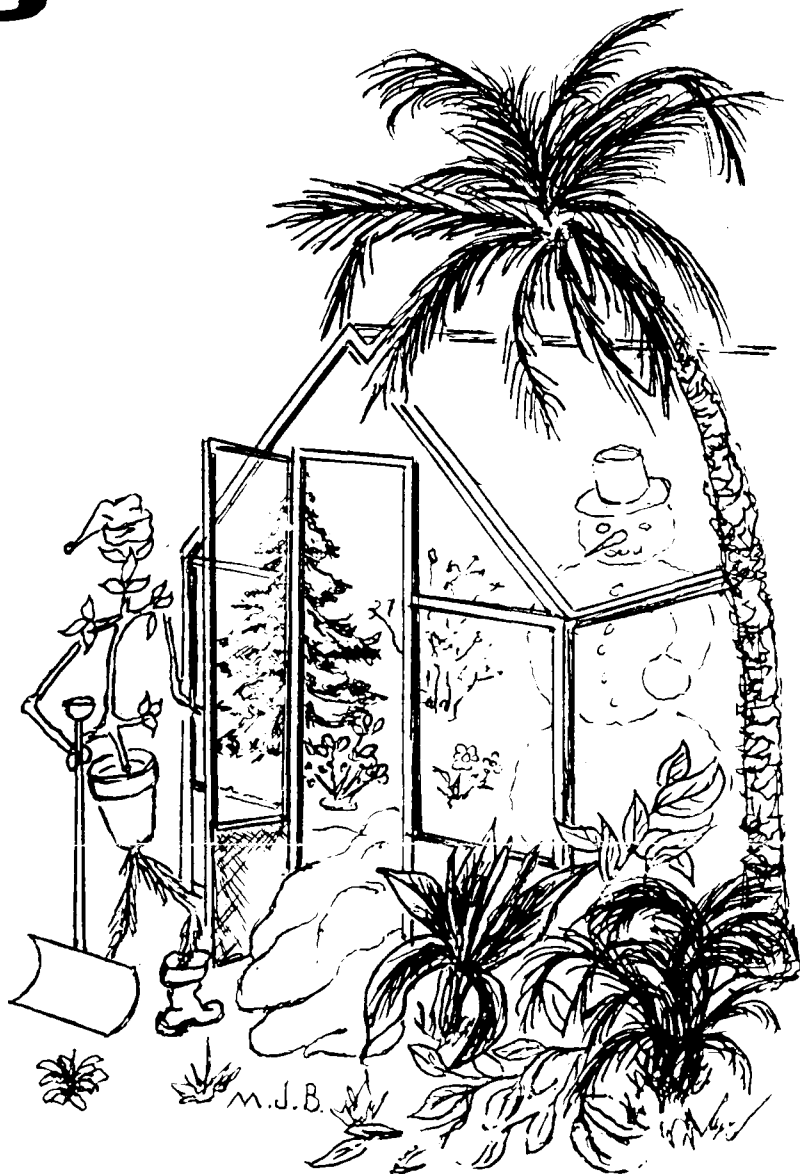
## WHAT'S IN THE MARKET

Cherimoya, Carob, Date, Feijoa, Fig, Kumquat, Lemon grass, Longan, Malanga, Mango, Olive, Pomagranate, Persimmon, Papaya, Passion fruit, Prickly pear, Tamarillo, Taro, and Water Chestnut.

## SEEDS

This month Bob Jurgens is offering tamarind seeds and carob pods. Tamarind seeds should be soaked for an hour or until their outer skin puckers. Getting the seed out of the carob pod is a bit difficult. Break the pod into sections, and gently chew the pod around the seed. It has a slight chocolate flavor. Once the seed is out, scrape it gently on one end with a file or sandpaper, soak overnight and pot up the next day. These are both dynamite plants in the Leguminosaeae.

If you are interested send, \$1.00 per packet or pod and an SASE to: Bob Jurgens, 116-32 227th St., Cambria Heights, NY 11411. Checks should be made payable to the Rare Pit and Plant Council.



## The 1993 New York Flower Show

**"Gardens For Our Future"**

**March 13-21, 1993**

10:00 am - 8:00 pm Weekdays

10:00 am - 6:00 pm Weekends

Once again we are making a special offer to all our subscribers. If you will sit our booth for two hours, we will arrange an all day pass at the show for you. The booth is lots of fun, you do not have to be an expert! If you are interested, call Doug Hawley at: 212- 925-7457.

**PLEASE JOIN US, WE NEED YOU!!**

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Rare Pit & Plant Council

CASHEWS, APPLES, OR, CASHEW APPLES?

Intrigued is exactly what I was, upon reading about "cashew apples" in the August 1992 issue of "Natural History" magazine. The pictures of the bright red and yellow fruit only piqued my curiosity and tickled my tastebuds even further. I had to track this acrid taste down!



Hmm! How to approach this problem? All right. Our English word "cashew" derives from the Portuguese "caju", which in turn originates from the Brazilian Tupi-Indian "acaju". Moreover, the Latin American Spanish name for cashew is "maranon", presumably called for Marahao, again observed by the Spanish in the sixteen century.

So the cashew apple hunt led me, the intrepid, native New Yorker, to discover yet another unknown ethnic neighborhood under my nose in the heart of Manhattan. "Little Brazil" stretches along 46th Street roughly, from Fifth to Seventh Avenues and is studded with a variety of "everything-you-might-possibly-want-that's-Brazilian."

But, my search, you should pardon the expression, bore me no fruit. Such distinctively Brazilian names as "cajuna" (diluted cashew apple juice), or, "cajuada" (cashew apple wine) were repeatedly met with blank stares. And then the invariable "You'll just have to go to Brazil; you'll love it." followed. And this from the only country where the cashew apple successfully competes with the nut as a consumer item!

The owners of the sophisticated and internationally well-stocked liquor emporium near Columbia University had never heard of these Brazilian products. Their catalogs listed nothing remotely similar.

A trip to the fresh air and fruit markets in the Dominican quarter along Saint Nicholas Avenue from 181st to 191st Streets yielded my first cashew-apple-in-hand in the form of "cajuil", jars of cashew apple preserved in a heavy sugar syrup.

**...but, what about the fresh item?**

Arnim, a Caribbean colleague, assured me that it had been seen from time to time in the fresh produce markets in Canarsie, out in the wilds of Brooklyn.

But a bit more research gave the lie to this and any hope of finding (it) anywhere in New York City. For while the tropical cashew tree does grow in the United State, if basically only in South Florida, its apples are highly perishable, prone to speedy decay, and cannot be kept for more than 24 hours before fermentation begins. In fact, about 95 per cent of the world cashew apple crop -- some five million tons - is left to rot under the trees. With the high vitamin C content (e.g. cajuna juice contains two to three times as much as citrus juice) the pity is all the greater what with food shortages and famines currently rampant in many developing countries.

Yet, what exactly is this cashew apple and its relation to the better known cashew nut?

The cashew, *Anacardium occidentale*, is a member of the Anacardiaceae (heart-shaped) family, which also includes the economically important mango (*Mangifera indica*) as well as the pistachio (*Pistacia vera*); less popular species of this family are poison ivy, poison oak and poison sumac.

One can easily see the family resemblance of mango to cashew by carefully cutting away the outer shell of, for example, a mango pit in order to expose the heart-shaped seed lurking inside the hollow; the mango seed looks almost exactly like a cashew nut.

As a matter of fact, Indian cooks, who today lead the world in ingenious exploitations of the by-now naturalized cashew, have traditionally made a flour from the native mango seed!

The highly unusual cashew fruit consists of two parts: the first is the fleshy pear-shaped stalk, the cashew apple itself. It actually looks more like a pear and is known as "pera" in many regions of Brazil. The second part is the kidney-shaped nut, which grows seemingly dangling from the apple above. Yet the true fruit is the nut only. This develops initially from the cashew flower, with the receptacle, or apple, supportively swelling out of the stem only later.

A typical harvest will yield, 100 to 150 pounds (apples and nuts together); twenty pounds of this will be unhulled nuts, resulting in a mere six pounds of dried, white, raw kernels, which, once roasted become the cashew nuts we know and enjoy!

Cashew nuts produce a compound, CNSL (caustic nut shell liquid) in the inner hull of the nut, containing the poisonous substances, cardol and anacardic acid. These are similar to the compounds found in mango rinds. A little known fact about CNSL is its use in the manufacture of brake linings; it absorbs heat efficiently!!!

CNSL has been used in tropical medicine in the treatment of scurvy, leprosy sores, warts, ringworm, psoriasis, as a gargle for sore throats and a cure for cracks in the soles of feet, among other discomforts. It has been used in West African tattooing and in West Indian complexion renewal (a tortuous treatment involving the blistering and peeling off of old skin).

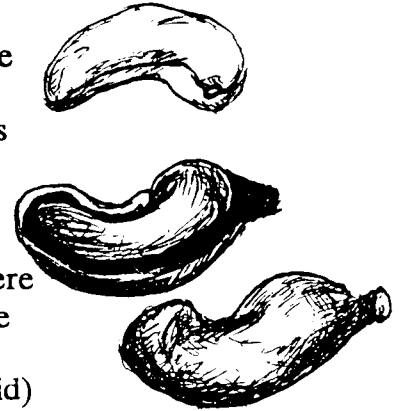
Needless to say, the unwary individual who attempts to bite into a fresh, green cashew nut will wind up with a severely burnt mouth and lips. Only shelled and roasted nuts are free of these virulent compounds hiding in the shell.

Many useful products are also made from the apple part including: fruit paste, candied fruit, syrups, jams, jellies, chutnies, pickles, vinegars, wines and liquors.

More specifically, in Goa, India, the apple is used to produce a carbonated beverage, "cashola," a low alcohol content drink known as "arrack" and a brandy called "fenni", or froth in the local Konkini dialect. In Tanzania a gin-like liquor called "koniagi" is distilled, while in Mozambique the same cashew apple yields a sort of wine, and Brazilian fermented apples produce yet another wine that resembles Madeira.

In an ideal world we would be able to enjoy all these cashew delights. Yet we must be thankful for what we have; delicious nuts and good brake linings.

Eliot Zak



**REMINDER:** Late January and early February are ideal times to pick boughs for indoor forcing. Shrubs that will bloom in 6 weeks are good candidates: forsythia, benzoin, quince and apricot.

Enjoy the ornamentals of a winterscape. Take a walk in the woods and note the many berried trees and shrubs. Look for the flowers of skunk cabbage poking through the snow. On warm days, look for the flowers on witch hazel; these are fragrant ribbon-like and uncurl with the warmth and close up with the cold.

If a January thaw occurs, reapply antidesiccant to all evergreen shrubs.

## GOURMET GARAGE

A number of years ago we reported on a gourmet food warehouse called Fly-in Foods. It specialized in selling fine and exotic produce flown in for New York's restaurant trade but available to the general public. Alas, Fly-in foods was bought by Kraft and disappeared. Happily it has been reincarnated, in Manhattan at 47 Wooster Street between Grande and Broome in a commercial area of SoHo. This is a wholesale establishment until noon on weekdays and then open to the public. It is also open from 11 to 6:30 on Saturdays and Sundays, a good time to go if you are traveling by car, as parking ranges from impossible to difficult during the week.



This is not an alternative to your neighborhood supermarket. It features hard to find or out of season items used by restaurants at prices below what they would cost in specialty food stores. On December 26 they had at least 20 varieties of fresh herbs. Fresh shitake mushrooms were \$7 per pound. This is a terrific price if shitakes are what you crave but no bargain if the standard button mushrooms will do as well. Dried Morel mushrooms were \$13.50 pound and Cepas \$ 6.50 for 2 ounces, half the price you would pay in a specialty shop. (You can tell we love mushrooms).

Mesclun greens were \$11.50 per pound, Reggiano Parmesan cheese \$8.00 a pound, extra virgin olive oil \$7.00 a liter and sun dried tomatoes \$5.25 per pound. There were also collections of vegetables and fruits which we did not sample. Small free-range chickens and pates seemed a good buy if you are in the market for this kind of quality.

In January they plan to offer a 10 % discount to frequent customers. We'll be back but not too soon! **John Hart**

## PITOGRAMS

Each Holiday Season the Pits have a party and play a game. Chris Carrdus designed this years game; Pitograms. Each person was given a sticker that had a number and an anagram on it. These were worn throughout most of the party. Each person also had a card with 30 numbers on it. EG: 1. Roach = 1. Orach (a bitter herb)

All of the anagrams are food stuffs.

- |                |                  |                  |
|----------------|------------------|------------------|
| 1. Carob lama  | 2. Ban polo      | 3. Players       |
| 4. Rustic      | 5. Onager        | 6. Voile         |
| 7. Chic radio  | 8. Contrail      | 9. Ole Japan     |
| 10. Chart Okie | 11. Each toy     | 12. Trail loam   |
| 13. A.A. Topic | 14. Tamil loot   | 15. If Lassy     |
| 16. Rob colic  | 17. I hit sake   | 18. AC girl      |
| 19. CIA jam    | 20. Mimes porn   | 21 A German poet |
| 22. Mum Pole   | 23. Great nine   | 24. Arrogant     |
| 25. Hail Bork  | 26. Gerry's Oboe | 27. Gala man     |
| 28. De-vein    | 29. Doll car     | 30. Rice lace    |

Shifrah Nimchinsky got everyone! Try it... Mail us your answers, and we will send a prize. Answers must be received before the publication of the answers in some 4-6 weeks.

## MICROWAVE



On Christmas day, after a brisk walk following turkey dinner, I opened the Plum Pudding and was greeted by the stern warning, that, it should be steamed at least 1 1/2 hours. What was I to do? The lady of the house suggested 5 minutes in the microwave and we had perfectly steamed Plum Pudding in a trice. It set me to thinking how many people have microwave ovens and only use them for leftovers and warming coffee being unaware of their other wonderful qualities.

Unlike traditional cooking methods which heat from the outside inward microwave ovens cook from within outward. This occurs when the microwaves cause molecules of water to move about and generate heat. This leads to a basic principle: things with a lot of water in them are good candidates for microwave cooking. Items like rice, crackers, bread and dried beans are better cooked by traditional means. Most vegetables have a high internal water content even though they are stiff. For example julienned carrots and turnips cook in a matter of minutes in the microwave. One of the best vegetable dishes in season is Ratatouille done in the microwave. Each vegetable component can be tasted as though in isolation.

Fish is delicious done this way. We cook a one pound salmon fillet for 5 minutes after marinating in a little olive oil and essence of mesquite. Be sure to cover the dish with a film of plastic wrap when cooking. It is tender, moist and so good we never have any left for salad.\* Another virtue of this type of cooking is that you can stop midway and test for doneness.

There is one unexpected danger in microwave cooking. Water tends to expand when it is heated. Tightly closed items like potatoes and eggs may explode if not vented. Potatoes are delicious "baked" in the microwave but do puncture the skin in several places.

Preserves, that ordinarily take hours of careful stirring can be made in a matter of minutes. Following is a recipe for microwave marmalade. **John Hart**

### MICROWAVE MARMALADE

1 cup of kumquats or calamondins  
1/2 cup of water

1 cup of sugar  
1 Tbl. lemon juice

Scotch to cover

Cut the citrus in quarters and remove the seeds. Put them in a bowl, and add just enough scotch to cover the fruits. Marinate overnight.

Strain the fruits and put in a very tall, 2-3 quart microwave container. Add the lemon juice and the water. Cover the container and turn the microwave on high for 4-10 minutes (until the skins are tender).

Uncover and add the sugar. Return the container (uncovered) to the microwave. Cook on high for 8 - 10 minutes. The marmalade should sheet off of a spoon. Pour into sterilized jars and seal.

The scotch gives the marmalade a pleasant smokey taste; all alcohol dissipates in cooking.

\* Your editor was so impressed with Dr. Johns salmon that she cooked salmon steaks, planning to serve chilled on a bed of lettuce for a ladies luncheon. Thank goodness she did it ahead of time. The steaks exploded! and covered the insides of the microwave with a thin film of the sacred salmon. Mercifully, when the steaks were flipped, the mess did not show up and she was still able to make an impressive presentation. (The marrow in the central bone caused the fish to explode. Use only fillets.)

## NOTES IN PASSING

Subscriber, Tom Basom, wrote asking us why we never included instructions about watering and fertilizing. General cowardice is the first reason, and the second is; both subjects are highly dependent on specific growing conditions, type of plants being grown and the general disposition of the grower. We've decided to bite the bullet, but note, these are our general rules....another grower might have very different instructions. Our growing conditions are: muted southern light on a city windowsill in a room at about 65-70°, a southeast facing, cool (58 - 75°) greenhouse and a fluorescent floor garden. All the plants get the same treatment from staghorn ferns to fruiting citrus.

### **Watering**

1. A general rule of thumb when watering is, water until you see the water coming out the bottom of the pot, when the soil feels crumbly, but not bone dry, water again. This is much more efficient than top watering daily.
2. In winter when temperatures are cooler and light is duller, most plants are semi-dormant. Note the soil will take much longer to dry out. Do not overwater during this time of year.
3. There is a silly, but effective rule for cacti and succulents, "Follow the national weather reports, when it rains in Arizona, water your cacti."

### **Fertilizing**

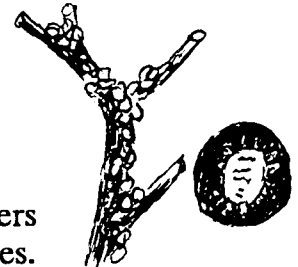
This is extremely individual, but an essential part of growing indoor plants. Potting soil is sterile and void of any nutrients. What follows is what we (and perhaps we alone do).

1. Twice a month we fertilize with 1/2 strength (as opposed to full strength on the manufacturers label) with an acid fertilizer. Our choice is Miracle Gro or Mir-Acid; they have chelated trace elements that are essential to citrus and citrus related plants. (Many fertilizers have trace elements, but they must be chelated for citrus to be able to absorb them).
2. At this time we also add one drop per gallon of water of "Super Thrive". This is a vitamin-hormone product and it may be witch craft. (The owner will not release exactly, what is in the product) However, we have noticed an enormous improvement in our orchids since we started using it... so we use it.
3. Sometimes the new growth on citrus trees is slightly yellowed with almost white veins. A county agent told us to use foliar feeding when this happens. The product we use is called Minor El and is sprayed directly on the leaves. We use this until the leaves turn a healthy green, usually within a month. Do not use other fertilizers at the same time you use a foliar product.
4. We withdraw fertilizers from November until mid-January. Most plants are semi-dormant at this time and do not need the food.

### **Further notes on bugs.**

The houseplants are in, the heat is on and here come the bugs! In this house the major problem is mealybugs. These are fluffy little critters that hide in the axils of the leaves, branches, and the underside of leaves. Under all the fluff is a hard scale like shell that houses the little beast.

For years we carefully went over all the plants with Q tips dipped in alcohol. One



drop or touch of alcohol and the fluffy mealie evaporated to a small brown shell. This was OK when the trees were small - now, however, they are 5-9' tall and the chore must be done on a step ladder.

In desperation we tried some very naughty systemics. They helped, but not enough to alleviate our guilt! As a last resort we started using a simple home remedy- 50° alcohol to 50° water plus a drop of liquid detergent. We spray the trees every 3-6 weeks or at the first sign of mealies. The bugs are gone, the leaves look great with all that washing, the fruit is safe to eat and our conscience is clear.

If you have any safe and effected home cure for pests please let us know. Write: Rare Pit and Plant Council, 251 West 11th St, NYC, NY 10014.



## MURDER



### Part I

Spelling is not your editors forte and from all the "gottcha" letters we've received, I think most of you know this. We do try hard though. One of our tricks, is to set the syllables to classic bars in music. Chrysanthemum, if broken down to: CHRYS...AN....THE...MUM can sort of be sung to Beethoven's 5th. Buddleia, another bugaboo of ours, fits rather nicely into Handel's Hallelujah chorus: BUDD...LI...E...A

### Part II

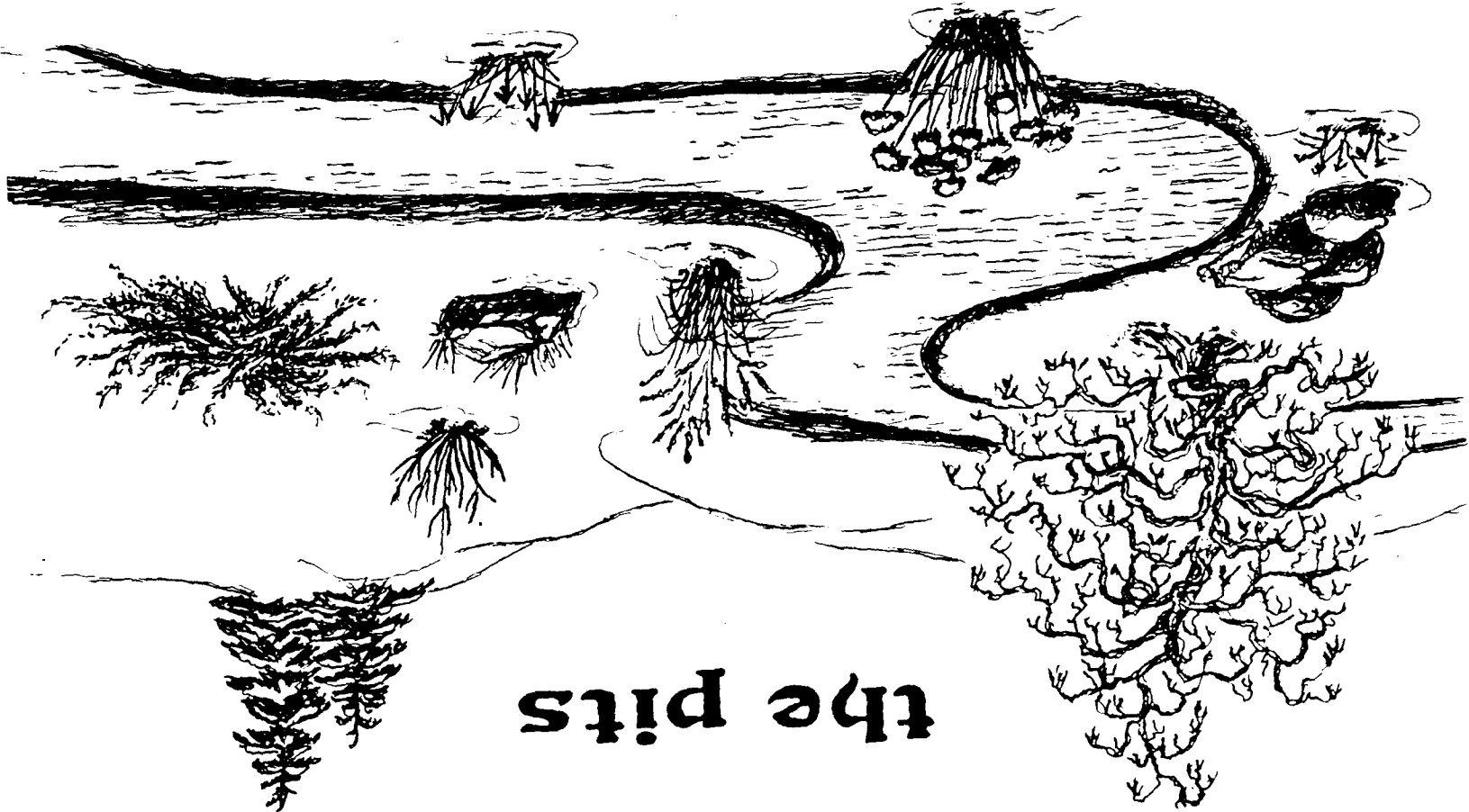
We have just received our long awaited Royal Horticultural Dictionary. We checked it out immediately with one of our sure fire words; **chrysanthemum**. There were between 100 and 200 hundred species, they have been reduced to three! Chrysanthemum carinatum, C. coronarium, and C. segetum.

Where have all the daisies gone?? Gone to: Dendranthema, Argyranthemum, Leucanthemum, Leucanthemopsis, Tanacetum, Tripleurospermum, and my favorite daisy (Montauk) has gone off all by itself to become Nipponathemum nipponicum. And what about our lovely little ground cover, miabye (C. Weyrichii) or the latest addition, silver and gold (C. pacificum); they're not even listed. Are the great taxonomists of the world, shooting faxes like lightening bolts around the world to each other trying to decide what to do with these poor little no names.

When murder has been committed you look for the beneficiary. Who benefits from this mess, surely not the plants, the nurserymen or the gardeners.! Surely a lynching is due, but we're not sure who.

### Part III

Until we can lynch all taxonomists, we would like to propose the following solution based on a Bill Brady (a Texas nurseryman) simple system of taxonomy for the many yellow wild flowers to be found in Texas: He calls them DYFs (Damn Yellow Flowers). Lets us refer to all mums simply as DDs (Damned Daisies) DD montauk, DD pacificum, etc.



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