

GARDENING

THE FIRST SUBJECT tonight is decorations for Christmas; yes, it will be with us in seven short weeks, so a few lines about that very necessary subject will not be out of place. First of all the materials you will require. Red candles, some scarlet ribbon, a yard will be enough for two decorations, a handful of holly, two saucers full of clay and a little glitter dust to make it all look frosty.

The method of making it up is simple. Shorten the holly sprigs to about 3" long and place the candle in the centre of the saucer. Pack the clay tightly around it making sure the candle is secure. Then push the holly into the clay having first removed a leaf or two from the holly base. Make it thick enough to hide the clay. Tie a nice bow of scarlet ribbon around the candle, apply a little golden syrup with a pencil down the centre of the leaves and shake a little of the glitter over it all and the job is done. Total cost — one candle and half a yard of ribbon. It makes an excellent table look even better, and the sideboard looking festive for the rest of Yuletide.

An idea for keeping holly with berries on it, is to cut it to the required lengths and keep it in the bottom of the fridge — "mice like holly berries, no mice in fridges". An idea for small sprays over pictures is to put several sprays into a potato, that way it keeps its station and the moisture in the potato does help a little too.

Whilst on holiday I went to the fruit trial and breeding station at East Malling, a place where all the fruit trials are held and all fruits are awarded certificates according to their worthiness. All fruits from apples to strawberries, and from there one can

obtain all the information required regarding soils etc. for the well being of the clones, plants etc.

In 1968 the staff there commenced the long task of breeding a self fertile Cox's Orange Pippin. They succeeded eventually and for the first time this Autumn it is possible to buy it as a tree. One can purchase it at a nursery in Gloucester (I have mislaid the name of the firm). It comes with a certificate of authenticity and it costs two pounds more than Cox's Orange. Its name is Queen Cox's Orange, it is on M.S.27 stock and it is a dwarf, seven or eight feet tall only, that all means anyone can grow one on their lawn and get fruit.

This, as far as I can see, has only one draw-back. It is this. The soil in Kent where apples really do grow, is ideal for Cox's. The atmosphere in Kent is also ideal, but around here Cox's do not flourish, so I think perhaps it is better to stick to varieties that over the years have proved their merits; but oh dear, those Cox's look so lovely! The raspberries, currants and gooseberries all look splendid, but having wasted a lot of time in the greenhouses looking at such things as heat trials, humidity trials and daylight trials, all too soon it was "everybody out" time. I could have quite happily spent several days there.

Whilst on apples, I saw some of those apples tree up a single stem. They were about twenty feet high and with apples right up to the tops of the trees, how the dickens do you pick them?

Don't forget to sow your giant onions on Boxing Day.

A.V.Mitchell.