

# AROUND THE GARDEN

By JOAN LEE FAUST

**FOR THIS WEEK:** *Little bulbs*—crocus, chionodoxa, scilla, species tulips and snow-drop—should be in the ground by now. . .  
¶Flats of cuttings and seedlings are stored

in the *coldframe*. . . ¶Dig and store *tender bulbs, corms and tubers*. . . ¶Continue *lawn mowing*. . . ¶Cut seed heads from *phlox*. . .  
¶Check *espalier* trellises; secure branches.

## Will Spring Be Silent?

Rachel Carson's provocative book "Silent Spring" propounds the hazards of pesticides. It raises some questions for gardeners.

Miss Carson says, "Gardening is now firmly linked with the super poisons. Every hardware store, garden-supply shop, and supermarket has rows of insecticides for every conceivable horticultural situation." The gardener does indeed use a host of insecticides, pesticides, weed-killers and fungicides in the daily course of tending the green grass and posies that grow all around.

The question is, are gardeners using too many of them? The answer varies with the gardener. Some are new to the game, fresh from the city. Others have been around plants and the outdoors since childhood. Sometimes the novice is quick to run for the spray can, when all that is needed is water or possibly fertilizer. Old-timers may spray indiscriminately just because they have always done it that way. A few gardeners never use sprays. Each individual gardener can look into this question for himself.

It would be difficult to imagine gardening without the use of pesticides, nonetheless. They have a definite place to keep gardens shipshape throughout the year. Black spot would be rampant on roses without some of the newer fungicides to keep it under control. Scale coats euonymus and many other ornamentals where there is no spray protection. Borers tunnel into peach tree trunks and iris rhizomes where DDT does not stop them. And wormy fruits are the result when apple trees are not sprayed.

But as Rachel Carson says, "Little is done . . . to warn the

gardener or homeowner that he is handling extremely dangerous materials." She proposes hanging a huge skull and crossbones above the area where pesticides are sold.

A better education program is needed to inform gardeners exactly how sprays are to be used. A man telephoned one day to ask why his evergreen was dying. He used several sprays and none of them worked. (The start of the trouble was mere leaf scorch because the plant was exposed to drying winter winds.) Then there was the woman who wondered why the

liable is the next-door neighbor who recommends something because it worked for him.

If spraying or dusting is the decision, then the next step is to obtain the proper material. The directions for use should be followed to the letter. If the directions say repeat in 10 days to two weeks, then repeat in 10 days to two weeks. Another dose the next day just to be sure it covered, is not following directions. Sometimes sprays or dusts will not show their effectiveness for several days.

The pesticide industry can be of greater service to the gardener. The ingredients are the most important part of the package, not the fancy lettering or colors to catch the customers' eyes. Also, the wording of directions is sometimes ambiguous. Better jobs can be done along these lines.

Perhaps smaller packages of garden chemicals (one season's supply) might be practical. Too many gardeners are reluctant to buy another kind of spray material because they have six partially used bottles and bags on the shelf. Smaller quantities would also eliminate the liability of storing toxic chemicals from year to year where children and pets poke into cupboards.

Miss Carson does cite "The Other Road" as she calls it, biological means of pest control. Government and industry have been delving into this approach for some time. Some gardeners have already practiced it where they have induced milky spore disease to control Japanese beetle grubs. Perhaps the future may hold a balance of chemical means and biological means. All the answers are not known, but a careful study of every aspect will certainly be worth the time and money spent.



weeds around her shrub border were not dying. She sprayed several times with DDT. (A herbicide kills weeds; DDT is for insects only.)

The most important thing the gardener must do before he uses a spray is to identify clearly the need for a spray and then learn what the specific control is for that particular problem. Answers to these questions can be found in a vast horticultural literature. Or, there are county agents, usually located in the county seats, who can be of great help. And many of the top-rate garden centers have qualified personnel to answer questions. Far from re-