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THE POTTING SHED by Mary B. Good

So you think you've got a handful.

How would you like to take care of 50,000 plants in a hotel lobby – poor light, low humidity, everybody mauling the merchandise?

If you've been to the Hyatt Regency O'Hare Hotel, you can't help but notice the indoor garden showplace - \$70,000 worth of grape ivy trailing expensively over 10 floors of balconies and sky-bridges, and oodles of lush, tropical plants gracing the space.

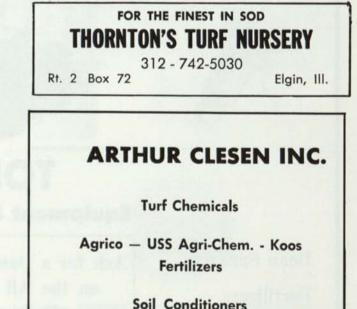
What a bonanza for the firm that got the contract to install all that greenery! Tropical Plant Rentals, Priarie View, just about cleaned out the national grape ivy supply to do the job in May, 1971.

In addition, the Hyatt job carries a \$1500 a month maintenance contract and a \$350 flowering plant change every three weeks, according to Florist Review magazine. (Mother always told me to go into the florist business, but no, I had to take up the pen instead of the trowel.)

The big job at the Hyatt is not without its problems. It took seven men three days to clean the ivy for Christmas. With automatic plant waterers attached to water hoses, the gardeners were able to water a half floor at a time. Normal maintenance calls for a gardener to work at the hotel two and one half days a week every week.

Romantic but dimly lit restaurants like The Other Place and Hugo's take their toll of the large, specimen plants. Even in the swimming pool, the plants have a hard time hanging on; chlorine gas periodically knocks off the touchy tropicals.

After a look at the problems of professional gardeners, thank your lucky lupine you've only got a few hardy houseplants to coddle.



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