

Garden Gifts by Fran Benton

Who doesn't love a lush tropical plant that will grow outside in the summer and look lovely? I bought such a plant two years ago and it died. Then I bought it again because I forgot that it died before and guess what? It died again. So why would anyone be surprised when at the height of garden buying lunacy in late April I buy the same damn plant again. So let me guess- you are sitting there on your sofa reading this, enjoying your favourite beverage, and you are saying – that lady is a bit of a dope! Yup! I suffer from the dreaded disease “plant optimism”. But this year the tropical gods smiled on me and it didn't die. Yahooo! And what a plant it is! It's an apricot coloured Brugmansia or Angel's trumpet. I saw one for sale at the Mill Bay Garden Club's show and sale in the spring. Before I knew it the Brugmansia was in the back of my car. Why? Plant optimism!



Brugmansia originates in the Andes, but sadly is no longer found in the wild. The good news is that it is easy to cultivate. It cannot live outside over the winter as the cold and wet will rot it. It can be brought inside in the winter and sprouts readily from cuttings taken in the fall.

A word of caution – it is horribly poisonous, so growing it around small children and pets might be dangerous. I don't touch it unless I have gloves on.



So what do you need to grow one? You need plenty of light, plenty of water, and plenty of fertilizer. I worried about spider mites that murdered the last few plants. Spider mites like areas of very still air. So I moved it to a spot where there is a good breeze. Success! By the way, most people grow this plant in a big fat plastic pot. That makes it easier to move around and bring inside in the winter. One of my neighbours cuts hers back and stores it in her

garage over the winter. In the spring they will appreciate fresh soil with lots of well-rotted compost. The last word on Brugmansias? They smell heavenly!