

## ATTRACTIVE BORDER PLANTS

BY EBENE REXFORD.

THE busy woman and the lover of flowers, whose time in which to give them attention has been limited, has grown annuals almost exclusively for so long a time—under the mistaken idea that by so doing she has saved time and labor—that she really thinks them the best flowers for her to grow. "I'm too busy, and too tired most of the time to take care of anything else in the flower line," she says, and goes on spading up beds and sowing seed spring after spring, and pulling weeds week after week through half the season, without realizing that she is expending a great deal more work and time on her annuals than would be necessary had she made a specialty of border plants. Were she to grow the latter she would be obliged to give them some attention in spring, of course, for no plant will grow, or should be expected to, without some care; but this attention will be slight compared with that required in making beds, and thereafter, all through the season, the hoe can be used in keeping the ground clean about them, thus doing away with the hard and continuous work of weeding by hand, which must be done among annuals to a great extent. I am safe in saying that a collection of one hundred herbaceous plants—and few collections among amateurs will come up to half that number—will require less labor and attention than a bed containing half a dozen kinds of annuals, each of which is grown in the ordinary quantity obtainable from the average package of seeds. The wider range secured by the use of herbaceous plants will be seen at a glance on looking over a good collection of them, and such an examination will make quite apparent one of the advantages of the border over the annual bed to the observant amateur.

ANOTHER advantage of the border over the annual flower garden is this: once planted it is good for a number of years. In fact, its full beauty is not developed until it is two or three years old, and it will not be necessary to do anything with it, except to keep it clean, for at least three years. Then it may be advisable to divide some of the plants or reset them, but this is easily and rapidly done, and involves less labor than that of transplanting annuals. Therefore it will readily be seen that in planting a border you are not only economizing time and labor for the present year, but for years to come, less of both being required each year after the first one, up to the time when it becomes necessary to reset or divide the plants in it.

ANOTHER reason is the dignity and stateliness of effect of border plants. Some of our annuals bear very beautiful flowers, but, planted away from the path or the house, they lose much of their charm because they cannot be seen to advantage. They are mostly low and spreading plants, and their ornamental possibilities depend largely on their being seen near by. Put them in the background, or at the distance afforded by the width of an ordinary yard, and they suffer a loss of their charms. But it is quite the opposite with nearly all herbaceous plants. They are mostly of comparatively tall growth, and at a distance of thirty, forty or fifty feet they are more attractive than when seen at close range. Distance lends a little enchantment to all flowers except those of most delicate texture and color. It is, therefore, not only possible to have these plants at one side or the rear of the lot without detracting from their charm, but in doing so their ornamental effects are heightened. By a careful consideration of their height and habit a border five or six feet wide may be planted in such a manner that it will appear like a solid bank of flowers and foliage, sloping down from Hollyhocks five and six feet tall, to such plants as Phlox *sublata*, which form a cushion-like mass not more than six inches in height.

Tall plants give a stateliness of effect not possible to obtain from anything of lower growth, and it will readily be understood that much more strikingly-ornamental results can be obtained from the use of them than from annuals. By an intelligent selection of varieties, based on a study of their habits and seasons of flowerings, it will be possible to have flowers from early in the season to late in the fall, therefore the annual has no advantage over them so far as the length of the flowering period is concerned. The annual blooms more profusely while its flowering season is at its height, but after that its brilliant display dwindles if seed is allowed to form and ripen, and but little in the way of adornment need be expected from it.

TO succeed well with border plants it is necessary to give them a rich soil. One cannot expect success with them unless they are well fed. Many persons are under the impression that it is only necessary to give them a place to grow in, in any kind of soil; this done, they will take care of themselves. After planting they are neglected. In a short time grass chokes them, or weeds dispute possession of the soil with them, and the result is: few and inferior flowers. This result, growing out of the kind of treatment described, has created a prejudice against plants of this class, which is most effectually dispelled by an examination of plants grown under the care of a conscientious gardener, such as the real lover of flowers—be he or she amateur or professional—will be. It is true that most of these plants are strong and robust enough to look out for themselves, after a fashion, if neglected, but it is not a fashion that the good gardener cares to follow. Plants of any kind, in order to give satisfaction, must have good care. Unless you can, and are willing to, give it, do not attempt to grow them. Let the soil be deep and mellow; spade it up to the depth of a foot at least—a foot and a half is better—and mix into it a liberal quantity of old, rotten manure, preferably that from the cowyard if such is obtainable; if it is not, use coarsely-ground bonemeal. A pound of meal to each five feet square of soil is not too much. While all of the plants mentioned in the subjoined lists are hardy at the North—all not proved to be perfectly so have purposely been omitted—I would advise giving them a covering of some sort in the fall. It may be thought unnecessary work to cover a plant able to stand the winter without it, but I advise it because a slight protection does much to keep the vitality of the plant up to the condition of highest vigor and health.

Plants not covered may come through the winter in apparently good condition, but they will be found, on comparing them with others to which some covering was given, to have suffered a considerable loss of vitality. This loss should be prevented, as far as possible, if we would grow our plants to perfection, which is, of course, what we would all like to do. It will, therefore, be understood that while a covering is not really necessary it is advisable. Plants exposed to the action of the elements in winter are frequently injured by heaving of the soil, consequent on freezing and thawing, and this danger is almost wholly prevented by covering their crowns with litter. It is an easy matter to apply it, and but little time is required in its application. All there is necessary to do is to throw a few forkfuls of whatever is used—coarse manure from the barnyard, hay or straw—about the plant, taking care to have the covering thickest over its crown. In spring, as soon as the plant begins to grow, the covering can be removed from it, and from the bed as well, if advisable, or it can be dug into the soil about the plant, to afford nutriment for its roots.

IN order to assist the amateur who may desire to begin making a collection of hardy plants I give a brief description of some of the leading sorts:

*Achillea filapendula*.—A showy yellow flower. Season, July to October; height, two to three feet. *A. serrulata flore plene* ("Pearl"), small white flowers in great profusion. July to frost; height, one foot to foot and a half.

Hollyhock.—This plant I would place at the head of the list for desirability. We have nothing making a finer display. Colors range from pure white through all shades of red and rose to darkest maroon and most delicate yellow; height, five to six feet; season, from July to October.

Aster.—A native plant of great beauty. *A. longifolium Formosus* is a very showy autumn variety, with bright, rose-colored flowers. *A. Novæ-Angliæ*, purple; height, from four to five feet. September to November.

Aquilegia.—Very beautiful. White, scarlet, yellow and blue; height, two feet. June to August.

*Coreopsis lanceolata*.—One of our best plants. Bright yellow flowers on slender stalks. An all-the-season bloomer. Fine for massing where a rich and solid color effect is desired, also for front rows; height, one foot and a half to two feet.

Delphinium (perennial Larkspur).—A noble plant. *D. Formosum* is the best variety. It blooms from June to August. It sends up a great number of stalks to the height of five or six feet, bearing its flowers of richest, most intense blue, in spikes often two feet long, and is so luxuriant in its growth that it well repays any attention paid to it at the start.

*DICENTRA* (Bleeding Heart).—An early bloomer, having very pretty foliage, and long curving racemes of drooping pink and white flowers. Very desirable.

*Gaillardia*.—A plant of low growth and spreading habit, having exceedingly brilliant flowers of rich yellow and red.

*Iris*.—This is, perhaps, our finest summer-flowering plant. It is wonderfully beautiful, rivaling the finest Orchid in richness of coloring. The *Kämpferi* section includes a grand variety of colors, ranging from purest white through all shades of blue and purple to rich maroon. In some varieties the color is solid, in others there are most peculiar color combinations, making it seem that Nature must have outdone herself in her effort to give us a royally beautiful flower of wonderful brilliance and richness of tone. June and July; height, from two to three feet.

Peonies.—Magnificent herbaceous perennials, having very large and showy flowers, comprising many shades of color from pure white to crimson and purple; height, from two to three feet.

Phlox.—Is to the border what the Geranium is to the window garden. They are of a wide range of colors—white, rose, violet, mauve, lilac, crimson and scarlet. They begin to bloom in July, and many varieties continue to flower till late in the fall. The *decussata* and *paniculata* hybrids grow from three to four feet tall, sending up a great number of stalks from each plant, each stalk bearing an enormous head of bloom. A strong clump of Phlox gives a more solid color effect than any other plant I know of. The mauve, lilac, violet and purple sorts should never be planted alongside the delicate rose varieties. The latter are very effective when used with the white kinds. *P. sublata* (Moss Pink) is a low-growing variety suitable for planting in immediate foreground.

*Pyrethrum uliginosum*.—A very fine fall-flowering plant. Pure white, Daisy-like flowers, with yellow centre; height, from four to five feet.

*Ranunculus* (Buttercup).—Very showy, small, double, yellow flowers; free blooming; height, from one to two feet. June to August.

*Campanula* (Canterbury Bell).—Old favorites. Large, bell-shaped flowers, blue and white; height, about two feet. June to August.

*Anemone* (Wind Flower).—A most beautiful perennial, valuable for its late-blooming habit. *A. Japonica* has rosy carmine flowers. *A. alba* has flowers of the purest white, continuing until cold weather; height, from two to three feet.

*Hemerocallis*.—Plants deserving a place in all collections. The most desirable two sorts are *H. flava*, lemon yellow, and *Dumortieri*, orange; height, from two to three feet. June and July.

*Helianthus* (Sunflower).—A superb class of autumn bloomers. The flowers, which are a bright, rich golden yellow, are borne on long stems, and are of great value for cutting. They must not be confounded with the tall-growing, coarse Sunflower often seen in fields and about barns. While it is true that they are relatives of the same family they are quite unlike each other, the flowers of this class being about the size of small Dahlias, and quite double, showing no bare, brown centre, such as characterizes the old-fashioned Sunflower. These grow from three to four feet.

IT must not be understood that the above list is a complete one of desirable kinds. It is simply one in which the kinds best adapted to the use of the amateur, at the beginning, are named. As he becomes familiar with their requirements and culture he can add other plants to his collection until the number runs up into the hundreds, if he desires to do so. But he will do well to begin modestly, and enlarge his border from time to time, depending upon standard plants for early effects. Hollyhocks are seldom worth keeping over for a second season of flowering. Then it is advisable to provide plants for next season's use by sowing seed this season. Sometimes plants give a good crop of flowers at each blooming, but as a general thing they fail to do so. Our newer strains of this most magnificent flower are lacking in the vitality which characterized the old-fashioned single sorts. Therefore it is well to have a new set of plants coming forward each year for use the coming season.

When plants in the border become so large that they crowd each other, or when it is evident that some portion of them is not as strong and healthy as it ought to be, they should be taken up and divided. Cut away all but the strongest and most vigorous roots, and replant none that are not healthy. If, as is generally the case, young plants are taken away from the old plants each year, for friends and neighbors, it may not be necessary to divide or reset the plants for a number of years, as this annual removal of a part of their roots throws the strength of the plant into the portion left, thus enabling it to keep up its vigor without division or resetting.

EDITOR'S NOTE.—Mr. Rexford's answers to his correspondents, under the title of "Floral Helps and Hints," will be found on pages 32 and 33 of this issue of the JOURNAL.