

over by the application of fresh material, the first few hours' scorching sun will dry them up. The same rule holds good about applying the earthing when the leaves of the plants are dry, as in the in-door subjects. It is a good plan first to give the seedlings a soaking of water before this dusting is given, and it is a good prevention, too, against mildew, also against the attacks of vermin; and, lastly, it is a sure and certain method to obtain short-legged, stocky plants, with a mass of fibrous roots, which, if carefully preserved, will allow them to be removed with little or no injury.

### ACHIMENES FOR CONSERVATORY DECORATION.

BY WILLIAM COLE,

Head Gardener, Ealing Park, Middlesex.



**A**MONGST the large number of beautiful flowering plants adapted for the embellishment of the conservatory during the latter end of the summer season, the Achimenes deservedly hold a high place. They are not, however, grown so generally as they might be, because of the belief which exists that they cannot be grown successfully without the assistance of a stove. It is true they require a higher temperature during the earlier stages of growth than the ordinary greenhouse affords, but they do exceedingly well in a cucumber or melon pit, or in a vinery or peach-house started early. There are, therefore, few gardens in which they may not be well grown, as nearly every one who has a garden at all tries to have a few cucumbers or melons. There is one important point worth noticing when speaking of their cultivation in either of the above-mentioned structures, and that is—they are very accommodating as to the time they are started into growth, and provided the roots are kept in a comparatively cool temperature, they need not be started until it is quite convenient to give them the temperature suitable for insuring a vigorous growth.

The compost to obtain a free growth from the first must be rather light and rich, and to insure these essential conditions, well incorporate together two parts turfy loam, one part fibrous peat, one part leaf-mould, one part well-decayed manure, and a sixth part of silver sand. If the loam should happen to be deficient in fibrous matter, a small portion of cocoa-nut fibre refuse may be mixed with the soil to keep it more open than it would otherwise be; it is also a very good plan to add a small proportion of clean crocks well broken up, or a few nodules of charcoal. The peat and loam must be chopped up rather fine, but only the large woody roots occasionally met with in the peat must be removed from it. The compost when used should be moderately moist, to prevent the necessity of applying water for some time after the roots are buried in the soil; and it will be of considerable assistance in promoting an early growth if the soil is warmed, by placing it in the structure in which the roots are

to be started a few days before it is used. It is certainly bad practice to use compost in a cold and wet state; for apart from the injury likely to be done to the roots, a loss of time must take place, whilst the soil is becoming of the proper temperature.

There are several good ways of potting the roots, but as it would require considerable space for the description of all of them, I shall confine my attention to the most simple, by which successful results may be obtained. For small conservatories, specimens grown in six-inch pots will be quite large enough, and in every way suitable. It will perhaps be desirable to grow a few in pots one size smaller, as they are very useful for standing in vases in the drawing-room, and some of the varieties with bright flowers have a very effective appearance on the dinner-table. First of all place in the bottom of the pots about two inches of crocks broken rather small, and cover them with any rough material that may be at hand, then fill the pots with the prepared compost to within about an inch of the rim, pressing it firm as it is filled in; make the surface level, and lay the roots regularly over it, at the rate of twelve for the larger and eight for the smaller sized pots. Cover the roots with about half an inch of the finest portion of the compost, and place the pots in a pit or house where a temperature of about 70 deg. is maintained. The soil must be maintained in a moderately moist condition until the young plants begin to show above the surface, and then the water supply will require increasing. They enjoy a rather liberal amount of atmospheric humidity during the early stages of growth, and it will be of great assistance if they are sprinkled overhead once a day with tepid water. In all cases, it will be well to remark that the water must be a few degrees warmer than the temperature of the house or pit.

The after management consists in supplying the plants with water as they require, sprinkling them overhead occasionally, and tying out the shoots. The sticks used should be neat, and put to the plants when the growth is about three inches in height. The shoots can then be tied to the stakes as required, and when the plants come into flower the tops of the stakes can be removed if they are higher than the shoots.

After the plants have made considerable progress they should have a place rather near the glass, and the foliage screened from the sun. After the beginning of May they can be grown in any structure that can be kept rather close, to enable the cultivator to husband the sun-heat, and afford the plants the desired degree of warmth. As they come into flower remove them to the conservatory, where, with ordinary good management, they will remain in good condition for a very considerable period.

The old established varieties are so well known as to render it unnecessary to allude to them; and I will therefore content myself with giving the names of the newer introductions, which should be added to the most select collection. The names and most distinctive colours are as follows:—

*Admiration.*—A good variety, of free robust habit; the flowers are of immense size, and of a rich deep rose colour; free blooming and attractive.

*Advance*.—Flowers deep reddish purple, with a light spotted eye, shaded towards the margin.

*Argus*.—Colour rich plum, large deep orange eye, spotted with carmine.

*Aurora*.—Flowers of a rich heavy scarlet, with light yellow eye; very effective.

*Celestial*.—Flowers of a very light blue colour, with attractive centre, the upper part of the eye being rich purple.

*Cherub*.—Flowers white, tinted with blue on the margin of the lobes; upper part of the eye bright blue, and the lower part primrose.

*Diamond*.—A variety in the style of *Ambroise Verschaffelt*, but having the purple blue radiation and blotch confined to the centre of the flower.

*Eclipse*.—Bright orange red eye, beautifully spotted with carmine, good habit and free bloom; desirable.

*Elegans Flore-pleno*.—Flowers large and fine, of a bluish violet colour, having five or six petals in the centre in the form of a rosette.

*Excelsior*.—Plum colour, large and fine, good habit, very distinct.

*Gibsoni*.—Flowers mauve, fringed on the margins of the petals, the tube white outside, tinted with light lavender blue towards the base.

*Grandis*.—Flowers deep violet colour, with a rich orange eye, finely spotted and shaded with carmine.

*Magnet*.—Orange, spotted with crimson, deep carmine circle and spotted eye.

*Marvel*.—Flowers bright rosy violet, with light throat, darkly spotted at the base; exceedingly showy and attractive.

*Masterpiece*.—Flowers smooth and well formed, and of immense size; colour rich rose, with violet shade; throat white, darkly spotted at the base; showy and effective.

*Mauve Queen*.—Large mauve coloured flowers, with a conspicuous light chocolate eye; splendid form and fine substance.

*Oberon*.—Bright blue, upper portion of the eye purple, white centre.

*Pink Perfection*.—Flowers large, colour magenta rose, the upper part of the eye rich carmine, the under lobes beautifully rayed with violet.

*Raphael*.—Fine rose colour, very free bloomer.

*Rollissoni*.—Flowers large, blue, with light throat, prettily spotted.

*Rose Queen*.—Flowers rosy lake, shading to purple, with orange throat; compact and good.

*Stella*.—Flowers large, clear magenta, orange eye, spotted with carmine; distinct and beautiful.

*Williamsii*.—Free-blooming, of good compact and branching habit, producing large flowers, vivid scarlet, with orange yellow throat; free and good.