

FLOWER-BRACKETS.



HAVE read "A. H.'s" description of her flower-baskets with much interest, and, as my flower-brackets are much admired, I think a few words about them may be acceptable. These brackets are made of plain wood, either half-circles or oval; they are lined with zinc, and have two zinc supports to hang them up by. I cover them with virgin cork, wired on in pieces of unequal length, the edges of each piece rasped to make them fit together well. In these brackets I sometimes put bulbs, when in bloom, floating in water, and held up by moss, the effect being enhanced by tastefully trailing ivy, twined over the back or rising above the flowers, and apparently growing up the wall and encircling a picture. When bulbs are over, wild daffodils and ivy look lovely, arranged in different-sized medicine bottles and common champagne glasses; and, of course, all cut flowers, mixed with ferns and creeping plants, look well. I also use a corner of the drawing-room, with a pretty table covered with china *across* it, in this way. A three-cornered tin fills the corner, the outside edge covered with bark; this is filled with plants, especially ferns, the tallest at the back; and, if possible, some extra tall plant, such as the Calla, rises behind the table, being quite "put in the corner," where it has a most effective and beautiful appearance.

Oddest, Bath.

C. H.

BEDDERS FOR NEXT SEASON.

BY JOHN WALSH.



THE bedding arrangements are now completed for this season, and before it is necessary to commence the formidable task of propagating a stock of bedders for next year, we shall do well to consider how much the collection of bedding plants can be improved by the addition of some of the most meritorious of recent introductions. Amateurs, as well as other classes of cultivators, have their favourite bedders; but there are certain things which are essential in all gardens, and to this class belong the few subjects which it will be my duty to direct attention. It will be well to observe also that there is a great advantage in considering this matter now, for plants purchased at once will yield a plentiful supply of cuttings, and a sufficient stock for producing a distinct effect by next season may also be had. Procured late in the autumn, or in the spring, there will not, with but few exceptions, be time to do more than propagate a few for trial purposes, and consequently a season will be lost.

Amongst the new golden-leaved bedders there are a few which demand our attention for their great value. The Golden Thyme, sent out under the name of *Thymus citriodorus aureus marginatus*, is a real gem; for it forms neat bands and lines, is easily kept in

proper order, and is quite hardy; it is, in fact, one of the best edging plants in existence, and may be most advantageously employed instead of the Golden Feather, of which we are now pretty well tired. The *Golden Fleece Thyme*, distributed this season by Messrs. E. G. Henderson and Sons, has self-coloured leaves of the richest gold, and is said to be a good bedder; but sufficient time has not elapsed for its character to be verified, but so far it possesses a rather strong constitution, and is rich in colour. Both these may be propagated *ad lib.*, as the point of each of the shoots will make a cutting, and the cuttings strike very freely. In planting thymes in the flower-garden it is desirable to select beds occupying sunny positions, and not to water them overhead, for the first-mentioned more especially loses its fine rich colouring when watered artificially. Another splendid golden-leaved bedder is Hibberd's *Meridian Sun* geranium, a plain-leaved variety, which is dwarf and spreading in growth, and whether exposed to sunshine or rain, is remarkable for the splendid display it makes. The leaves resemble in colour a well-ripened orange instead of the yellowish-green hue common to geraniums of this class. This may of course be propagated freely in the open border, and as it may be purchased for a few shillings per dozen, it will not be an expensive affair to get up a good stock for next year. *Coprosma Baureana variegata* has been known in gardens for five or six years; but it is only within the last year or so that its capabilities as a bedding plant have been tested. For edging and panel beds it is most valuable, the richly-variegated and glossy leaves forming one of the most effective bands imaginable. It is very difficult to propagate, and the best way of obtaining a stock is to plant them out in a bed of nicely prepared soil, and peg the branches down and cover them to the depth of an inch or so with nice light and sandy soil. Roots will be emitted from the branches throughout their entire length, and if the plants are furnished with long straggling branches, a good stock may soon be procured, for the stems may be cut into as many lengths as there are small secondary shoots, and each piece will make a well-established plant by the following spring. It will be a greater convenience to plant them in clumps of a convenient size for covering with a handglass, in case they should not be rooted sufficiently for taking up before the first few frosts. The variegated *Coprosma* requires no special attention when planted in the flower-garden, except pegging-down the longest shoots, to keep them to the proper level. Nice bushy specimens are most useful for the decoration of the conservatory during the winter season. *Mesembryanthemum cordifolium variegatum*, a pretty procumbent, spreading plant, with creamy variegation, is now tolerably well known; but it is not grown according to its merits in small gardens. It is very easily propagated, and requires no attention except trimming the edges of the bands and lines occasionally.

Turning to the plants grown for their flowers, several of considerable value will be found. First we have a new double bedding *Lobelia* belonging to the *Pumila* race, and known as *Lobelia pumila grandiflora flore-pleno*. It has the compact habit peculiar to the varieties of *Pumila*, and the flowers form bright blue rosettes, and

are so freely produced as to present the appearance of dense cushions of bloom. It is certainly a very interesting novelty and a most valuable bedder. This was exhibited at a recent meeting of the Royal Horticultural Society, by Messrs. Dixon and Co., Amhurst Nurseries, Anton Street, Hackney, and it excited a considerable amount of interest, and had the distinction of a first-class certificate conferred upon it. As it can be procured for eighteenpence per plant, it will not be necessary to incur a very large outlay in raising a stock; two or three plants will be ample for the purpose. *Lobelia pumila White Pearl* is also desirable, as the flowers are pure white, and therefore useful for edgings. *Lobelia Brilliant* belongs to the *Speciosa* type, and is the best of the class, for it is much heartier in habit, and the flowers are several shades deeper in colour. This is decidedly the best of the blue lobelias, and the stock should be renewed annually from cuttings. A fitting companion to the preceding is *Lobelia White Perfection*, which makes charming beds and most effective edgings. These and *L. pumila grandiflora* may be regarded as the best of all the numerous varieties, and the only ones required in the small flower-garden.

The free-growing *Iresine Lindenii* still remains at the head of the list of leaf-plants with dark foliage, for it combines an effective appearance with a hardy constitution. It cannot be too highly recommended to those who have not yet grown it, as it is readily propagated, and may be wintered in an ordinary greenhouse or pit, provided it is kept rather dry at the roots. In *Coleus Verschaffeltii splendens* we have the most effective, perhaps, of all the *Coleus* for bedding. In hardiness and freedom of growth it is equal to the parent, and the colour is a rich-flamed crimson, instead of deep chocolate. *Coleus* are only adapted for bedding in warm localities, and cannot well be wintered in the greenhouse; but where they can be grown this should have the preference for its general good qualities.

Several verbenas have been introduced for bedding purposes; but the only varieties deserving the attention of the amateur are *Basilisk*, brilliant scarlet, fine habit and free, and *Pomerania*, a splendid hybrid, between the first-mentioned and the dwarf-growing *Melindres*; it is very dwarf, and the scarlet flowers are produced freely in neat trusses.

A very considerable number of bedding geraniums, of all classes, have been introduced within a very short time, and it would require a very long purse, and, as a leading grower puts it, "a field to grow them in," to keep pace with them. Some few are most valuable, and we have had three very fine pink-flowered varieties added to the list. These we are bound to regard as deserving of notice, for none of those already in general cultivation can be considered first-class. Of the three *Maia* is the best; it is dwarf, free, and the flowers are of a very rich shade of rose-pink, forming grand masses. *Bella* is also good; but the flowers are a few shades lighter. *Mrs. Upton* is also desirable. They are to be preferred in the order in which they are here set down; but, it is proper to add, the prices range in the same order from five shillings to sixpence per plant. *Triomphe de Stella*, a compact-growing nosegay, with brilliant orange-scarlet

flowers; *Marathon*, dwarf nosegay, with narrow-petalled flowers; and *Wellington*, deep crimson, are really first-class, and should be added to the most limited collection. One of the most distinct and beautiful bedding geraniums in the market is Hibberd's *Feast of Roses*, which produces a profusion of bright mauve-tinted pink flowers. Hibberd's *Lilac Banner* is a splendid lilac-coloured bedder.

CHOICE APPLES FOR SMALL GARDENS.

BY JOHN SCOTT,

Merriott Nurseries, Crewkerne, Somerset.



IN planting apple trees in small gardens it is of vast importance to select those kinds only which produce heavy crops of fine, well-flavoured fruit, and which are, moreover, thoroughly reliable. Varieties which produce fine fruit, but are shy croppers, or those which only bear good crops every few years, are alike unsuitable for the small garden, although they may be of considerable service in places where there is sufficient space to grow a large number of varieties. There is an abundance of varieties which may be planted with the greatest degree of confidence, but owing to the large number in cultivation, it is by no means an easy task for those who have not paid considerable attention to the apple tree, to select the right ones. At the present day, I suppose we have over 3000 varieties of the apple cultivated in our gardens and orchards. My own collection numbers over 1200 sorts, not counting cider sorts, and is yearly increasing; not that I consider, by any means, so many kinds useful to any one individual. My aim in gathering together so many varieties of fruits is, to be able to distribute the best sorts only throughout the country, and to each locality as far as possible the kinds best adapted to it. It is no great task to get together a collection of apples, but it is something different to get them correct to name; no one but he who embarks in forming a large collection of apples can tell the difficulties that have to be encountered. When you take up the nursery catalogues and tick off all the sorts you find new to you in name, and then order them, what a *melange* of sorts one gets! I do not think there is in the kingdom a collection that is anything like correctly named. When I receive any sorts wrongly named, or that I think wrong, I send to all the best nurseries I know for the same sorts, and when I have got them—in some cases a dozen trees all under one name—I plant them side by side to see how many of them are alike, and when I find a fair proportion having the same character, then I conclude I may with some degree of safety select those that are alike as the true sort. By this means I have no fear of distributing varieties wrongly named: a matter of very great importance, for nothing is more annoying to the private cultivator