

free stocks—trees possessed of vigour and long-lasting properties—will be looked to for profitable results rather than such as are chiefly interesting because of the excessive trouble they occasion, and their general adaptiveness for planting in the front of a doll's house. S. H.

HUNTING FOR BEDDING PLANTS.

BY JOHN WALSH.



OME bedding plants are so much affected by peculiarities of soil and situation, that it is essential to see them abroad as well as at home, before pronouncing a decided opinion on their merits. So strongly am I convinced of the importance of this, that I annually make a tour of the public parks, in the neighbourhood of the metropolis, where the bedding arrangements are on a large scale, and also of those nurseries in which the bedders form an important part of the trade. By doing this, and comparing the notes made in my rambles with those made in my own garden, I am well able to speak with confidence of the value of novelties, or the adaptability of old favourites for special purposes.

Before passing on to an enumeration of the most desirable bedders for propagating in quantities for next year's display, I would strongly advise those who have not done so, and are interested in floricultural pursuits, to visit the London parks with as little delay as possible. The parks in which the bedding arrangements are on an extensive scale, and in the best possible taste, are Hyde, Victoria, and Battersea, and they are here placed in somewhat of a proper order of merit. The bedding display in the first-mentioned park is really grand; the series of beds extending by the side of Park Lane, from the Marble Arch to Hyde Park Corner, are simply grand, and afford the best possible example of the manner in which flower-beds should be kept during the summer season. They are not only filled with a due regard to the artistic blending of the colours, and quite solid with bloom, or, as the case may be, most richly coloured with leaf plants, but they are most tastefully kept, not a leaf nor a flower being out of its proper place, or a dead leaf or unsightly flower-truss perceptible anywhere. It occasions no small amount of work to keep the beds in the same perfect order as these, but on the principle of "What is worth doing, is worth doing well," the beds should either have the necessary attention, or be turfed over and blotted out of existence.

The planting in front of the ivy-covered house, not far from the bridge by which the Serpentine is crossed, is extremely rich, as also is the bedding in front of Kensington Palace.

The bedding in Victoria Park is also extremely good, the principal points of interest being near Shore Place, Shore Gate, and by the side of the lake, and by the side of the road running from the Crown to the Royal Hotels.

Flowering and leaf plants are well balanced, and employed in a manner which would quite startle many of our country readers. The principal points of interest in Battersea Park are the arrangements near the refreshment-house by the side of the river, and in the sub-tropical garden. The nurseries near London in which bedding plants may be seen in perfection are the nurseries of Messrs. J. Carter & Co., Forest Hill, S.E.; Mr. H. Cannell, at Woolwich, in which the geraniums are especially good; Messrs. E. G. Henderson & Sons, Wellington Road, St. John's Wood; and Mr. Fraser's, Lea Bridge. The parks are of course open free, but no one would think of occupying the time of trade-growers in inspecting their collections without taking care that they should be repaid.

The Geraniums will, I understand, be dealt with elsewhere, and, as the new bedders were described in the August number of the FLORAL WORLD, I shall proceed briefly to comment on the best of miscellaneous bedders which have been in commerce for some years.

Amongst flowering plants *Ageratum*s have done exceedingly well, and the best for all purposes is *Imperial Dwarf*, which under ordinary circumstances attains a height of nine inches, and blooms continuously and profusely throughout the season. To insure its flowering early, the cuttings should be struck early in the autumn, as spring-struck cuttings do not commence to flower until some time after they have been planted out. It is the best and most constant of light blue bedders.

The best of the bedding *Verbenas* are—*Crimson King*, scarlet; *Nemesis*, deep crimson; *Basilisk*, brilliant scarlet; *Oxonian*, purplish blue, very fine, the flowers large, and the plant neat and vigorous; *La Grande Boule de Neige*, pure white; *Blondin*, magenta; *Polly Perkins*, magenta.

In Battersea Park, *Bouvardia Vreelandi*, pure white, and *B. angustifolia*, scarlet, have been used with good effect. I also have them bedded out, and towards the end of the month shall lift them carefully, pot them, and place in a cucumber-house which I use as a stove for wintering coleus and other things requiring more heat than the greenhouse and pits afford. They will then continue in bloom for a considerable period.

In some places *Calceolarias* have not done well, owing most probably to the soil being poor and not stirred deep enough. The best of the bedding varieties are *Golden Fleece*, yellow, dwarf; *Golden Gem*, yellow, rather long flower-stalks; *Crimson Queen*, crimson, medium growth; *Mrs. Paul*, velvety maroon; and *Prince of Orange*, brownish orange. *Aurea floribunda* is one of the best when it does well, but as it is so unreliable I have discarded it.

I have had a few fine beds of *Lantanas*, and as they have been solid with bloom throughout the season, they have been most effective. The best I am yet acquainted with here and elsewhere are—*Ne Plus Ultra*, *Raphael*, *Imperatrice Eugenie*, *Mons. Rougere Chauviere*, and *Lutea grandiflora*. *Lantanas* should not be planted too extensively, one or two beds being quite sufficient for a medium-sized garden.

This year I had a very extensive collection of bedding *Lobelias*,

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and from it I have selected the undermentioned as being decidedly the best: namely, *Blue King*, light blue; *Brilliant*, deep blue; *Mazarine Gem*, bright blue; and *Speciosa* (a fine stock from cuttings), of the type represented by the latter; *Alba cœrulea*, light blue; *White Pearl*, white; and *Pumila grandiflora*, blue, belonging to the *Pumila* section, and from those intermediate in growth between the two classes, I have selected the following:—*Compacta alba*, white; *Imperial*, dark blue; *Omen*, purplish lilac; and *Purple Prince*, purple. All the above-mentioned may not be required in any one garden, but they are all good and can be selected according to the colour and character of the plant required. It is, however, preferable to grow several varieties, as it enhances the interest attached to the garden.

The *Violas* do not continue in bloom throughout the season unless the situation and weather are especially favourable to their growth. They are, however, exceedingly good during the early part of the season, and when planted alternately with silvery variegated geraniums most charming effects are produced, and if the *violas* cease to bloom freely towards the end of the summer, it is of not much consequence. The best of the series is Cannell's *Queen Victoria*, *Perfection*, *Enchantress*, *Magnificent*, and *Lutea Major*. These should be propagated now, and wintered in a cold frame.

The best of the *Heliotropiums* for bedding still continue to be *Mrs. Lewington*, *Miss Nightingale*, and *Jersey Beauty*.

The best of the leaf plants with silvery foliage are *Centaurea ragusina*, *Cerastium tomentosum*, *Echeveria secunda glauca*, *Veronica incana*. The most useful of the golden-leaved plants are the *Golden Chickweed*, *Golden Feather*, *Mesembryanthemum cordifolium variegatum*, *Coprosma Baueriana variegata*, and the *Golden Thyme*.

The best dark-leaved bedders are *Alternanthera magnifica*, *Coleus Verschaffelti*, *C. Verschaffelti splendens*, *Amaranthus melancholicus ruber*; and for large borders, *Perilla nankinensis*.

SPECIMEN PELARGONIUMS.

BY CHARLES TURNER,

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IN speaking of the cultivation of specimen pelargoniums of the show class, in which, as the majority of your readers are well aware, I have been engaged for many years past, it will be well to make it understood that large specimens are not required for ordinary decorative purposes. There is, of course, no objection to the employment of large specimens in the embellishment of the conservatory, and, no doubt, many amateurs would find a considerable source of pleasure in their production, and in showing their friends the results of their skill in plant-growing. For exhibition purposes, specimen plants