CHRYSANTHEMUMS FOR THE CONSERVATORY.

BY ADAM FORSYTH, F.R.H.S.,

Brunswick Nursery, Stoke Newington, and 128, Mount Street, Grosvenor Square, W.

IN the FLORAL WORLD for January, 1868, I had the honour of offering a few hints on the cultivation of the Chrysanthemum for the decoration of the conservatory, and I now return to the subject; for with increased experience we gain increased knowledge, and I hope that the suggestions that will be offered will be of as great a service as those which appeared in the communication above referred to. After being before the world as a chrysanthemum-grower for so many years past, it is quite unnecessary that I should speak of the interest I take in that flower; but it is satisfactory to me to note the fact that its cultivation is rapidly extending, and where one amateur grew chrysanthemums in a satisfactory manner five years ago, there are at least twenty who produce a fine display in their conservatories during the month of November. It would take up too much space to mention all the fine displays I have seen during the past season, but in the gardens of that veteran grower and raiser, and highly-respected gentleman, Dr. Sharpe, at Waltham Cross, occurred such a sumptuous display, that some mention must be made of it. The plants were grown in the natural style, and well furnished with magnificent flowers, and arranged in two banks, with a path between them, in a roomy structure seventy feet in length. A more glorious display of flowers could not possibly be produced during the autumn, and no word painting can convey a proper idea of it. It is not to be expected that many amateurs can produce a display equal to his, yet it is a comparatively easy matter to produce one which will be in every way satisfactory, and I should much like this class of cultivators to show their friends that the conservatory can be made to present a bright and cheerful appearance during the most dull and dreary season of the year.

In the gloomy months of November and December, when the chrysanthemum is in its prime, gaslight entertainments begin to assume increased importance, and many of these might be considerably enriched by the aid of these noble flowers. The poinsettia and the solanum are charming things for gaslight decoration, but the chrysanthemum affords endless variety at an extravagantly cheap rate; and in a private entrance-hall, a concert-room, a bazaar, or the covered approaches to any place of public resort, a bank of chrysanthemums affords a brilliant welcome and a grand accompaniment to any kind of festivity, because every known variety appears to advantage under gaslight.

The employment of chrysanthemums in decoration of the greenhouse and conservatory is most important, and I have endeavoured to exemplify the value of the plant for this purpose at my nurseries at Shacklewell and Stoke Newington, during many years past, and in that time I have seen many a garden made gloriously gay by the

adoption of the plant for a conservatory feature. It should be remembered, that it is not necessary to bestow so much care on specimens for home use as for a public exhibition. Provided they are leafy, healthy, flowery, bright, and buxom, the requirements of the case are satisfied. They need not be trained at all; they may all be grown according to their natural characters, as bushes, and if the assortment consists of pompones and large-flowering varieties in about equal proportions, they may be grouped so as to form a dense rich wall of flowers, well backed up by a groundwork of dark leafage.

In preparing a display of autumnal flowers for the conservatory, it is well not to attempt too much, and it should consist chiefly of untrained plants. There is no particular necessity to begin business until March; by so doing, the cultivator is spared the trouble of nursing cuttings through the dismal days of winter. Having the stools stowed away in a pit or under a wall, the cultivator will, early in March, take as many cuttings as he requires, and soon make nice plants of them. If he has no stock to begin with, he will, of course, have to beg or buy. In begging, it is well to make sure that you obtain cuttings worth having, with their proper names attached; for it is not at all unusual to find that a season has been wasted in growing sorts that have long since been discarded by good judges as unworthy of a place in any selection, unless it be a selection of sorts to be extinguished.

It will be will to stop all the plants early in April, and a fortnight or so afterwards to shift them into forty-eight-sized pots. About the middle of May they should all be put out and plunged. Very many amateurs who do the chrysanthemum well do not plunge the pots. To them I say, long experience and observation—having the interest of my business to make me watchful—have convinced me that those who do well without plunging may do better with it, and they will escape many risks which plants in unplunged pots are always exposed to.

As to any further stopping, a little judgment must be exercised. Look over the plants in the first week of June, and then and there settle that part of the business. If you are not familiar with the sorts, take a trade catalogue and look them through. When you find by the label on your plant that you have to decide as to one of the finest incurved varieties, do not stop the plant. In any case, if you find the variety is *not* recommended for specimen culture, refrain from stopping. On the other hand, those which *are* recommended for specimens may be stopped in the first week of June, as being free to flower. You will be safe, and will obtain more flowers than if you refrain from stopping. To sum up the case in a few broad rules. First-class Incurved and Late-flowering varieties should only be stopped once, and better if not stopped at all. Reflexed, Free-flowering, and Early-flowering kinds in all classes may be stopped twice, and the smaller sorts, such as Intermediates and Pompones, may be stopped three times, and the last pinching should be done in the early part of June or by the middle of June at latest.

One good reason for looking over the plants in the first week of

June, and then making an end of the pinching business, is that about the middle of June the plants should be shifted into eight-inch pots, to give them a good chance in the height of the growing season. Keep them freely watered at the root, and overhead in dry weather, and even in rainy weather see that they are moist enough at the root, for it often happens that, while the leaves are well washed by rain, the roots get none of it.

By the middle of July it will be necessary to settle another point —which are to be shifted and which are not. Here, again, the sorts may be classified very nearly as above; but the first thing to consider is the size and general appearance of the plants. The first-class show kinds will be the better for a shift into eleven-inch pots where large specimens are required, but the reflexed and smaller kinds may be allowed to flower in eight-inch pots, and may be helped to the end of their journey by liquid manure as soon as they have quite filled their pots with roots. In any case, however, robust plants that have quite filled their pots with roots, and that appear, by their ample leafage and stout stems, to be capable of growing considerably larger yet, should be shifted to give them a chance of making a grand show when their day of triumph arrives.

The question will arise in the ambitious mind—why stop at eleven-inch pots? why not go on far beyond that? The proper reply, perhaps, would be, that experience has proved that to overpot these plants is to waste labour, and render them unwieldy without the slightest gain, but probably a loss both in quantity and quality of flower. The growing season extends from about the 1st of March to the 1st of August, say, to put it roughly, six months. In that time the plant will attain to a certain size, according to its advantages, and it is the business of the cultivator to provide all the advantages the plant can make use of. But when the growing season ends, the wood begins to ripen, and the flower-buds to swell, and the increase of root-room then is more harm than good. In case of any large vase or basket or tub requiring to be filled with chrysanthemums, the best way would be to plant it with a lot of healthy plants out of forty-eight-sized pots about the middle of May, taking care not to overcrowd them, and to keep them nicely tied out to prevent destruction of the lower leaves by overlapping.

In preparing a conservatory display, the greatest care should be taken to keep the plants green to the bottom. In growing for cut flowers this is of less importance, although it is not unimportant.

In selecting for conservatory decoration, free-flowering kinds of the most distinct and striking colours are always to be preferred. Many of the most perfect exhibition incurved flowers are not showy, and, although a connoisseur will prefer them to all others, many of the high-coloured reflexed flowers will be preferred by those who are less critical. Plenty of flowers and plenty of colour are the principal desiderata in selecting for conservatory decoration, and happily there are a few of the very finest exhibition kinds, such, for example, as Jardin des Plantes, Mrs. G. Rundle, Dr. Sharp, and the Prince of Wales, which give us an abundance of flowers, of the most attractive character. It is not important to select early-

blooming kinds, because they will have the aid of glass after the first or second week in October, and be safe from the destruction of their opening buds by frost. I think if I had to provide a display for an employer, and certainly if, apart from all business, I were to grow a lot for my own enjoyment, I should select for the conservatory a few from every one of the classes, including Incurved, Reflexed, Japanese, Chinese, Anemone, Pompone; and trust for the names to the "Garden Oracle."

NOTES ON POTATOES.

THE notes on "Disease Proof Potatoes," which I contributed to the FLORAL WORLD for December 1872, have, I am happy to say, created a great demand for the sorts recommended, and I beseech of our readers to make themselves safe in respect of seed potatoes in good time, for the disease proof sorts will soon be bought up, and we may really witness a repetition here of the American mania, which raised the value of some sorts of potatoes to fifty dollars a root. All we experimental gardeners can do, is to state as plainly as possible what we know, and then leave the laws of supply and demand to settle the commercial matters. Now it will be seen, we hope, how important it is for the interests of the public, and of really honest journalism, that we should keep aloof from all trading operations and avoid the very appearance of evil. We have but one correction to make in the list of disease proof potatoes published last month. It is proper that *Wood's Scarlet* should be added to the list, for this we find is one of the very best on our wet soil, and in several far removed wet and dry districts, it has given good crops in the past summer. If I could be carried away from public duty by private friendship, I should stick to *Headly's Nonpareil*, which is without question the finest potato in the world, and as the production of my dear old friend, Mr. Headly of Stapleford, a most agreeable reminder to me of happy days of "auld lang syne." Mr. Headly has lately sent me samples from his lively sandy loam, and they are certainly superb. He reports that he has taken up a heavy crop, and is as much as ever satisfied that Headly's Nonpareil is worthy of a place in every garden in the British islands. Fortunately for the cause of truth, it matters not to Mr. Headly, as it matters not to me, on financial grounds, whether his seedlings or my seedlings produce money in the market, and so we can consider their respective claims without fear of the detestable influence of what is called the "commercial principle." Therefore in respect of the favourite potato of my dear old friend—who is one of the best judges of *quality* in vegetable productions that ever lived—I shall say that on dry soils it is disease proof, but on wet soils the disease annihilates it, and there, as respects the disease, the grand question is at an end. In respect of quality, apart from the subject of disease, Headly's Nonpareil is all that Mr. Headly declared it to be years ago—the finest potato in the world.