

## SHOWY FLOWERS FOR THE CONSERVATORY.

BY THOMAS TRUSSLER.



**I**N the following remarks it is my intention to offer a few hints on the cultivation of the more showy plants adapted for conservatory decoration which may be raised from seed. By selecting the proper subjects, commencing early, and encouraging the plants to make a vigorous growth from the first, a very beautiful display of flowers may be had in the conservatory during the latter part of the summer and the whole of the autumn. To enable me to compress these notes into the smallest possible space, I will at once say, that all the subjects that will be mentioned can be most successfully grown in a mixture of turfy loam and leaf-mould, or decayed manure. The pots, it is necessary to add, must be clean and well drained; and until the plants are put in the pots in which they are to flower, they must not become pot-bound; for when they are kept too long in small pots they receive a considerable check, and many will commence to flower prematurely, and all the care possible afterwards will fail in producing good specimens.

**AMARANTHUS.**—The Willow-leaved Amaranth, *A. salicifolius*, is very attractive, and useful for conservatory decoration. The main point, to secure specimens with richly-coloured leaves, is to raise the seed in a cucumber or other heated pit, and to keep the plants in the same structure until they are established in three-inch pots. After arriving at this stage, remove them to the greenhouse, and in about a fortnight shift into six-inch pots, which is the largest size they will require. They can then be placed in the open air, or allowed to remain in the greenhouse. In both cases they must be fully exposed to the sun.

**ASTER.**—The *Dwarf Bouquet*, *Large-flowering Dwarf Pæony*, and *Dwarf Chrysanthemum-flowered*, are all exceedingly useful for the conservatory. To have them in perfection, sow the seed in pans, and prick them off, when about an inch in height, into three-inch pots, and shift into pots two sizes larger when they are established. They must be grown entirely in the open air after all danger from frost is past, and, to reduce the labour of watering them, plunge the pots in any loose material that may happen to be available for that purpose. It is desirable to place them far enough apart to prevent overcrowding, and a supply of moderately strong liquid manure twice a week will be of considerable assistance after the plants are well established in the pots in which they are to flower. The plants must not be divided when they are repotted. Sometimes they will be attacked with green-fly, and when this happens, sprinkle them with water, and then dust the foliage with tobacco-powder, which must be allowed to remain on twenty-four hours, and be then washed off with clear water. If left on too long, a danger exists of the foliage being more or less injured.

**BALSAMS.**—Usually cultivators are advised to sow the seed in

heat early in March. This is altogether unnecessary, excepting when the plants are required in flower early in the summer. Plants raised from seed sown now will bloom superbly during the autumn, when they will be of the most value for decorative purposes. Not unfrequently the failures we occasionally hear of may be attributed to sowing the seed early, and subjecting the plants to a starving process, owing to an insufficiency of room previous to the bedding plants being cleared out of the houses and pits, preparatory to their being planted in the summer quarters. The seed should be sown early in the month, and the seed-pot put in the cucumber frame; or, if that course would be inconvenient, a warm corner of the greenhouse will do. Immediately the plants are well above the surface, place the pots near the glass, to prevent their being drawn up. Pot off separately when about two inches in height, and bury the stem to within a short distance of the seed leaves. After they are nicely established, a cold frame will be the most useful quarter, provided they are placed near the glass. Few classes of plants are more likely to suffer when placed in a dark or insufficiently ventilated part of either the greenhouse or pit than balsams. By shifting them on as they fill the pots with roots, they can be grown to almost any size; but for ordinary decorative purposes, specimens in six or eight-inch pots will be the most suitable. If extra large specimens are required, remove the flower-buds from the main stem; but in all other cases they should not be removed, for by far the largest and most double blooms are produced on the main stem. After the pots are well filled with roots, liberal supplies of water will be required, and at every alternate watering, liquid manure may be substituted for clear water with advantage. The *Camellia-flowered* and *Rose-flowered* varieties are alike good.

**BROWALLIA.**—These are pretty little annuals, and well worthy of being grown on a small scale. They succeed best when kept in rather small pots, in a cucumber or melon pit, during the earliest stages of growth. To produce large specimens with the smallest amount of trouble, put four plants in three-inch pots when they are pricked off, and then shift them into five or six-inch pots, without dividing them. *B. elata*, blue, and *B. elata alba*, white, are both good.

**CELOSIAS.**—To have these in perfection, sow at once, and place the seed-pots in heat, and keep the young plants in a warm corner of the greenhouse until they have attained a considerable size. Five-inch pots will be quite large enough for these plants. The red varieties are the most attractive, but the yellow varieties are well worth growing.

**COCKSCOMBS.**—The cultivation of these plants is very similar to that of the *Celosia*, when they are required for ordinary decorative purposes. The main point is, perhaps, to procure seed from a good strain. They must be placed near the glass, and at each potting bury the stem low in the soil, to keep them as dwarf as possible.

**MIGNONETTE.**—Sow the seed in five-inch pots, and then thin out the seedlings to about four to each. The open air or a cold frame will be the best situation until the plants are required in the

conservatory. To secure large plants, remove the first flower-spikes before the flowers expand, and use liquid manure alternately.

**PHLOX DRUMMONDI.**—The varieties of this phlox are all of great value for conservatory decoration. They can be grown singly or several in a pot, and when large specimens are required, the last-mentioned course will be the best. They may be grown in a pit or greenhouse until they are in flower. They will require stopping once or twice, and should be supported with neat stakes when necessary. The scarlet and purple varieties are the most attractive.

**THUNBERGIA.**—All the varieties are useful for baskets, but they may be grown advantageously as dwarf specimens. To produce these, sow early in the month, and place the seed-pots in heat. Prick the seedlings off into five-inch pots, and immediately they are nicely rooted transfer them to pots two sizes larger. Then fix in the pots a wire trellis or a few branches of birch, for the growth to trail over. Syringe them frequently overhead, to prevent red-spider, which are very partial to the leaves, taking up their quarters upon the foliage.

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## FUCHSIAS AS BEDDING PLANTS.

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AS the bedding season is once more at hand, it appears desirable that we should consider the claims fuchsias have upon us as bedding plants. Their value for conservatory decoration is well known and appreciated, but their capabilities for garden decoration are not estimated so highly as they should be.

In the cultivation of fuchsias as bedding plants there are three essential points to which special attention must be directed. The first is to select beds in moderately sheltered positions, the second to well prepare and to liberally enrich the staple soil with manure or leaf-mould, and the third to put out strong plants. It must be distinctly understood that fuchsias do not thrive satisfactorily in a dry, hot position, fully exposed to the rough winds, and they are therefore quite unfitted for terrace gardens or other situations similarly exposed; neither are they adapted for geometrical gardens. The best way, in my opinion, to deal with them, is to select a bed in an isolated and rather shady position, and then fill it with several sorts, somewhat regularly intermixed as regards the colours of the flowers. Then if they make satisfactory progress they will soon form a solid mass of healthy green foliage, regularly studded with their pendant flowers.

With reference to preparing the beds, it is only necessary to say that the soil should undergo a preparation by first dressing it liberally with well-decayed hotbed or stable manure, leaf-mould, or vegetable

May.