

FANCY PANSIES.

BY J. JAMES,

Head Gardener, Redlees, Isleworth, W.



FANCY pansies differ from the show varieties in having flowers remarkable for their rich and fantastic colours, and also in their more robust habit. In the flowers of the old fancy varieties the colours are most curiously intermixed, and present a most striking contrast to the show flowers, with their regular and well-defined markings. A great improvement has, however, of late, been effected in the flowers, for those of the more recent introductions are of good shape, and the colours nearly as well defined as in the show flowers; but with this difference—the dark colours are in the centre of the petal, instead of being round the outside, as in the case of the yellow and white-ground flowers. Some of the colours of the new fancy flowers are wonderfully rich, especially those with dark maroon blotch and bright crimson belt. They are certainly worth the attention of the amateur, who has a greater regard for startling colours than for “properties.” But, as a grower of the show varieties for many years, I cannot say that as yet I have much affection for them. Notwithstanding, I am perfectly willing to help those who are partial to them to grow them to the highest degree of perfection.

The month of August is most favourable for commencing, as the plants can now be purchased in good condition for planting out, and there will be ample time for them to become well established before the winter; and established plants will now furnish a plentiful supply of cuttings. In propagating pansies at this or any other season of the year, select the young and vigorous shoots which push up from the base, as the flowering shoots are quite worthless for propagating purposes. Take the cuttings just below the second or third joint, according to the distance they may happen to be apart, and then remove the lowest pair of leaves. Insert them in pots provided with an efficient drainage, and filled with a light sandy mixture. Water them well in, and place in a frame in a shady position. The only attention they will require until they are struck will be to sprinkle them overhead once a day, and remove all that perish as soon as signs of decay are perceptible. During the first ten days or a fortnight, admit air by tilting the lights during the night, and afterwards it may be admitted during the day also. Sufficient water will be required to keep them fresh, and no more, and the quantity necessary to effect this will, of course, depend entirely upon the weather. When nicely rooted, remove the lights altogether, to prevent their being drawn up.

As it is important to plant them in their permanent quarters before they are too firmly established in the cutting bed, the preparation of a bed in an open position should be commenced at once. Speaking generally, it may be said that they thrive most satisfactorily in a rather light and deep loamy soil, although they will do

very well in any good garden soil. Clay soils are the least suitable, because of the risk of their perishing during the winter. Moreover, the roots are unable to penetrate far below the surface, and they are consequently more readily affected by dry weather during the summer season. As regards the preparation of the soil, I would suggest that a liberal dressing of leaf-mould or well-decayed manure be applied, and the bed then turned up to a depth of about eighteen inches. If the soil is of a heavy character, the addition of a liberal quantity of gritty matter, such as road scrapings or river sand, will be highly advantageous. Plant them out at a distance of about twelve inches apart, and water them when necessary during dry weather until they are properly established. Two or three small pieces of stake may be put round each plant to keep it steady, in case of rough winds. Beyond this, no further attention will be required.

In heavy soils it may be necessary to afford them the shelter of a cold frame during the winter, and in this case it will be desirable to grow them in small pots, and then plant out in February, instead of planting them in three-inch pots; and use a mixture of turfy loam and leaf-mould. The frame will require ventilating during the winter, and in dry, mild weather the lights may be removed altogether. Sometimes pansies, when in pots, are attacked with mildew; but this may be kept in check by dusting the foliage with sulphur as soon as it makes its appearance. In case growing them in pots would entail more trouble than could well be afforded, it is a good plan to plant them on a bed raised about twelve or fifteen inches above the general level, and then put on each side a brick raised on edge, to break the force of the wind; or, what is better still, they may be protected with one of the portable ground vinerias now manufactured.

The undermentioned will form a very good collection to commence with, as it comprises varieties representative of all the shades of colours found in this section:—*Agnes Laing, Alexander Crombie, Alexander Forbes, Buttercup, David Syme, Lady Ross, Lady Coutts Lindsay, Miss Hope Johnstone, Pandora, William Baird, Amy, Duncan Clark, Miss Minnie Mather, Miss C. Arbuthnot, Mrs. T. Scott, Mrs. Laird, Major Mackay, Medora, Orange Boven, Mrs. Shirley Hibberd, Striped Queen, William Hay, Wonderful.*

PRESERVING AND MOUNTING FERNS.



HAVING been requested by a correspondent to offer some advice on drying and mounting ferns, we shall proceed to deal with the subject rather fully, for the assistance of other readers also, who may be in need of similar information.

Drying and mounting fern fronds is most easy of accomplishment by any one with an ordinary degree of intelligence, yet a certain amount of care is essential to preserve the fronds in good