## PREPARING AND PLANTING FLOWER-BEDS.

BY THOMAS TRUSSLER.

AS all who have the good fortune to possess a flower garden are actively engaged in preparing the beds in readiness for the plants with which they will be filled during the summer, a few remarks upon the manner in which the beds should be prepared and planted will, perhaps, be of considerable service to many readers of the FLORAL WORLD.

Beds that are unoccupied in the winter should be prepared during that season; but as spring flowering plants are now so extensively grown, there are but few gardens in which this work can be done much before the early part of May. The first steps will, of course, be to clear the beds of the spring flowers, and to deal with them according to their requirements—such things as daisies, polyanthuses, and violas being planted in nursery beds; and the forget-me-nots and silene, which can be raised from seed sown in the summer, either cleared off and removed to the rubbish heap, or chopped up and turned in when the beds are dug. As the spring flowers are rather late this season, it will not be desirable to wait, in every instance, until they are quite past their best, because of the risk of the summer bedders being injured by the delay. When the beds are empty, give them a liberal supply of manure. Of course every one must use some degree of judgment as to the dressing, for much depends on the plants with which the beds are to be filled. For beds to be filled with verbenas and calceolarias, the soil cannot well be too rich. A lighter dressing will be quite sufficient for all the scarlet geraniums, for if the soil is too rich there will be an excess of leafage over the flowers. The same may be said of all the variegated varieties; if the soil is too good they lose the delicate colours for which they are so much admired, and therefore fail to answer the desired end. But, as a general rule, a bed intended for any kind of summer flowering plants should have a dressing of some sort to enrich it. The beds having been manured, take out a deep trench at one end of the bed, say two feet wide, and the same depth, if the bottom soil is good; if not, take off the good mould from the top, and well stir the bottom soil, mixing with it some manure or rubbish of any sort. Follow on through the bed in the same way, and when the end of the bed is reached, the soil taken from the first trench will fill up the last one. After this let the beds be well forked over once or twice, so that all the soil may be well mixed with the manure, and also that it may be thoroughly exposed to the air for a few days previous to the bed being planted.

By adopting this plan there is a great advantage gained, by the bed not requiring any watering in the busy summer season, when every hour is of great importance to those who have their hands quite full of other work without using the water-pot. I have invariably found that plants growing in beds prepared as recommended in this paper do not want watering after they are well established in the beds.

May.

In planting the flower garden, which of necessity occupies a considerable time, due regard must be paid to the relative hardiness of the several subjects, so that the work may be commenced at the earliest moment, without exposing the more tender subjects to the cold and otherwise unfavourable weather occasionally experienced during the month of May. The hardiest plants should, of course, be put out first, and the most tender last.

Calceolarias and Verbenas are, perhaps, the hardiest of the tender bedders, and should therefore be put out first. Ageratums and Geraniums are the next hardiest, and such things as Coleus, Iresine, and Alternantheras the most tender. Hardy plants like Cerastium tomentosum, Stachys lanata, and Veronica incana, which are used for edging purposes, should be taken up, divided, and replanted annually. When allowed to remain in the same position for several years without being disturbed, they become ragged and unsightly. Take the Stachys for an example; when left undisturbed for several years together, it produces its large ugly flower-spikes in such abundance as to require the most incessant attention throughout the summer to keep the edging tidy. On the other hand, when divided and replanted annually it seldom flowers, and practically requires no attention to keep it in order.

All plants used for the flower-beds, whether growing in pots or not, should have a thorough soaking of water the night previous to their being put out, for when put out with the ball of soil dry they suffer severely, as the water applied to them afterwards runs down the sides without moistening the soil in which the roots are confined. When they are turned out of pots, the roots should be loosened round the outside to enable them to strike more readily into the fresh soil. Loosening the roots as here suggested will, of course, take up more time than would be taken up in simply turning the plants out of the pots and dropping them into the holes, as is so generally practised. However, the small amount of extra time and trouble required will be more than repaid twentyfold, as they will grow away at once, instead of remaining at a standstill for several weeks. The plants should also have a good soaking of water in the evening after they are planted. A light sprinkle overhead at the same time will also be of immense assistance to them.

The plants grown in beds of soil made up in the frames must be taken up carefully, a few at a time, and taken direct to the bed in either a sieve or shallow box. After the planting of the bed is completed, it should have a thorough soaking of water to settle the soil about the roots. The evening should, as far as possible, be taken advantage of for putting out the plants grown previously without pots.

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Secreting Canals of Plants.—The last number of the *Annales des Sciences Naturelles* contains a memoir on the Secreting Canals of Plants, by M. Van Tieghem; a paper On the Nervation of the Ovule, by the same author; a memoir on the same subject, as last mentioned, by M. Le Monnier; Observations on the Bulbs of Lilium Thomsonianum, by M. Duchartre (this has been already alluded to by us); and various other papers on Cryptogamic and Fossil Botany.