

Carnations are somewhat expensive to purchase, and those who have a few plants, and are desirous of increasing their stock, should strike the cuttings in March or April. In purchasing at this season of the year, strong well-furnished plants must be selected, or they will not produce any flowers until next year.

The undermentioned are the best at present in commerce, which may be obtained at a cheap rate:—*Garibaldi*, purple; *Perfection*, white flaked purple and crimson; *Queen of Whites*, pure white; *La Belle*, the best of the white varieties. *Dragon*, *Jean Bart*, and *Boule de Feu*, are three good scarlet varieties. *Souvenir de la Malmaison*, rosy flesh, is very large and fragrant. *Prince of Orange* and *Ascot Yellow* are two robust-growing and perpetual-flowering picotees, with yellowish flowers edged with red. *White Queen*, white, and *Miss Joliffe*, deep pink, are both first-class, and in every way desirable in the smallest collection. The *Flower of Eden*, white, and *Coccinea*, crimson scarlet, are two fine forcing pinks, which do well in company with the carnations.

ON STRIKING GERANIUMS.



HUNDREDS of fallacies there are which we must sweep away, but first and foremost let me destroy that dogma which says scarlet geraniums are best propagated in the full sun, without the aid of a drop of water. Geraniums may be propagated that way, and in fact almost any way. The man who would lose one per cent. of geranium cuttings this time of year, no matter by what process he might endeavour to root them, would scarcely deserve to be admitted into any garden, for fear his presence should prove fatal to vegetation. But because you can root geraniums, or because they will of themselves make roots under almost any circumstances, does not prove that mode of propagating to be the best which is most exhaustive of the sap of the stem, and most destructive of the leaves, by means of which alone the cutting must live until it has made roots. That system of propagating is the best which exhausts the cutting least, which by taxing it very slightly allows it to retain a certain portion of its initial vigour until it has made new roots, and is enabled once more to draw nourishment from the earth by a truly natural process. Nor is it true that it matters not how many joints long a cutting is, nor what length of time elapses between making the cutting and the cutting making roots. The more quickly it is rooted the better. If shaded, kept suitably moist, and assisted with a temperature consistent with its nature, any and every kind of cutting, whether of a succulent or an erica, a geranium or a begonia, will do much better, both in making roots and afterwards as a plant, than if put to all sorts of trials, and allowed to make roots, as it were, only by the skin of its teeth. Make all your cuttings of geraniums short; two joints suffice—one joint in the soil, the other joint with its leaf out. Three, four, or five joints make nice plants, and you may, if you please,

root thick ripe rods a foot long; but the short cuttings make the best plants, and to go beyond four joints is to lose ground by taking too long steps. Always shade the cuttings, and sprinkle them frequently, so as to keep them fresh and unexhausted; and as soon as they have begun to grow fairly, place them full in the sun, that they may grow sturdy and healthy from the first. Seeing how quickly geraniums make roots, and how much handsomer the plants grow if they are in separate pots from the first, the best practice for amateurs is to pot each cutting separately in the first instance; and cuttings properly rooted now in 60-sized pots will not want a shift till next March or April, or not at all if for turning out in May, though to have such specimens as I grow they ought always to fill 48-sized pots, with only one crock and a rich compost, at the spring shifting, before they go to their places in the beds and borders.

S. H.

THE CULTIVATION OF ASPARAGUS.



ORTICULTURAL writers make it the custom to run in a pack together like so many hounds laid on one scent, and knowing of no other road to reach the game. A fine illustration of this is afforded by the current instructions on the cultivation of asparagus, which are simply the result of successive copyings for a century or two past; each separate writer pretending to give his own experience and the *latest* results of inquiry and observation, while actually copying oft-repeated directions, making no additions of new knowledge, correcting no errors, and giving not a gleam of light from his own individual intelligence. An exception must be made in favour of Mr. Earley, who, indeed, has nothing new to say on the cultivation of asparagus, but has discovered it to be so valuable a vegetable that he would have the poorest cottager devote his attention to it instead of to the "everlasting cabbage and potatoes."

As to the value of asparagus, every one must decide for himself. The man who can make money by growing it for market will justly value it, and do his utmost to grow a fine sample. The amateur who desires to derive from his garden useful additions to his daily diet will do well to think twice before devoting a bed to the production of asparagus. It is an elegant, delicate, wholesome, and delicious vegetable; but it is of the least possible use in the animal economy: its repute as a purifier of the blood and a preventive of rheumatism is founded on a fact of no value; and its repute as a nutritious vegetable is founded on fiction altogether. Its quick and peculiar action on the kidneys tends to no important results, and it contains so few of the elements of nutrition that we should remove it from the category of foods and class it with edible toys and dinner-table curiosities. Let those who love asparagus give their minds to growing it, but let no one be deceived by current notions of its value as *food* or *medicine*, for in the proper sense of those terms it is neither.