

## VARIEGATED KALES.

(With Coloured Illustration of Stuart and Mein's Variegated Kales.)



COMPARATIVELY few of our readers, we imagine, are familiar with the beautiful plants, leaves of which are represented in the accompanying plate. They are cheap, and we cannot fairly say that they are choice; but as decorative plants they are peculiarly useful, and by those who understand them they are highly valued, for they take a place in the flower garden that no other plants can fill, and those who are disposed to look down upon them (as we confess we have hitherto ourselves been), will perhaps find in the few remarks we have to offer reasons for regarding them with some degree of respect.

In all seed catalogues there are offers of variegated kales, and in the large catalogues there are described half-a-dozen or more sorts. It is known to a few that when circumstances are favourable to the employment of these kales as bedding plants, they are remarkably effective, but the general opinion is against them; and it is not to be wondered at, for cabbages do not, at first thought of the matter, appear to have any claims upon our attention as decorative plants. However, it is a matter of fact that in a few gardens in Scotland, and notably in that of Miss Hope, at Wardie Lodge, a charming effect is produced in the winter season by planting variegated kales in the beds that were occupied during summer with the ordinary bedders. In common with many other cultivators who are blessed with inquiring minds, we have again and again tried these kales, in hope of obtaining a good out-door display during the depth of winter by their aid, and on every occasion our failure has been complete. The strong soil and the warm climate of Stoke Newington have made gaunt, coarse things of them, or, at all events, if they proved to be handsome, as they generally did while standing in the kitchen garden, they changed suddenly to gawky things the instant they were transferred to the flower garden.

Finding that those who took to the kales in earnest made no sign of repentance, we obtained samples of seeds from several quarters, and made another attempt, and *succeeded*. Instead of sowing the seeds with the usual eating cabbages and broccolis, in March, we waited until April, and then sowed samples on the shady side of a large bank of brick rubbish and garden sweepings, the slope being slightly levelled to make a seed bed. Thus we began on a starving system, and the practice proved to be right. When the plants were large enough to handle, we planted them rather thick in the poorest plot of ground we could find, though in the end it proved still too good for them. All the sorts grew too strong to satisfy us, but they were a really wonderful lot, and we might have made a fine parterre display with them. The way to use them in the flower garden is to plant them in the beds so deep that the

densely-frilled and richly-coloured centres alone remain above ground. Then they make masses of colour that are truly attractive on a sunny day in winter, though we must confess that on dull days they are not attractive. As for that, it may be observed particularly that crocuses are not worth looking at during "dirty" weather, so no wonder if the crimson cabbages are not quite so gay when hidden by fog as when illuminated by sunshine.

Having settled the matter thus far, we wrote to Messrs. Stuart and Mein, of Kelso, who are famous for their fine strains of fancy borecoles, and obtained a few samples. These proved to be several degrees better than our own samples grown on poor soil in the coldest spot we could find for them, and we conclude therefore that the climate of Scotland is better adapted than that of the south of England, to bring out the decorative qualities of the plants. From the samples received we have selected four as the most striking, and the best for both bedding and garnishing, and possibly to help out in winter decorations within doors. The large leaves in the plate represent small varieties of cabbage, characterized respectively by deep crimson and delicate cream-coloured leaves. The finely-frilled leaves, of a rich purplish crimson and clear cream colour, are examples of Ragged Jack, a celebrated kitchen-garden vegetable in Scotland, in this case transformed, as if for the celebration of Christmas, and prepared to keep the best of company. Besides those four beautiful varieties, we received from Messrs. Stuart and Mein a sample of a proliferous variegated kale, which produces crimson and purple frills on the midrib of every leaf, and a sample of variegated Scotch kale, the leaves of which present a variety of colours, and are most elegantly frilled and edged with green. Many of our readers, who cultivate poor soils in bleak situations, will, we hope, give these kales a trial, for ours is a long winter, and if we can increase our sunshine by growing some of it, we may expect to be the happier for the experiment.

S. H.

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### THE CULTIVATION OF BEANS.



THE Garden Bean is one of the most nourishing vegetables known, and although it does not enjoy universal favour, for many people regard it as both vulgar and uneatable, this is compensated by the enthusiasm of those who proudly rank themselves amongst eaters of "bean feasts." It is unfortunate for this noble esculent—for such, with your permission, we regard it—that it is often served in a vulgar manner, and the most constant lover of beans will admit that when allowed to grow old, and then badly cooked and served with coarse bacon, the bean is not a thing to be desired, except in case of a famine, or to afford a fat pig a change of diet, and an experiment in cannibalism. Let us do justice to the bean, that we may see it on the table as green as grass, tender, and slightly meally, without being in the least old, and accompanied with real parsley-butter as



VARIETIES OF VARIEGATED KALES.