

THE AMATEUR'S PLANT STOVE.

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TO have a continuous supply of flowers throughout the winter season, a plant stove is imperatively necessary, and the want of this is one of the worst of the many difficulties with which the amateur has to contend. There are a certain number of plants which bloom naturally with no more warmth than that afforded in the winter by the greenhouse, but they are comparatively few; the flowers lack that brilliancy of colour so much appreciated during November and the two following months. There are in the greenhouse, it is true, the camellias, winter flowering heaths, and a few other things; but few amateurs have a sufficient stock of the former, or are skilful enough to grow the heaths very successfully. With the aid of a stove a large number of extremely showy subjects, which really require but little skill to manage them properly, may be grown. My object, however, in writing this is not so much for the purpose of showing the necessity of a stove in a garden, where flowers are always in request, as it is to point out the way by which the difficulty, where there is no properly constructed stove, may be overcome.

In a very large number of gardens are to be found small houses which, during the summer season, are devoted to cucumbers and melons. These houses make capital stoves during the winter season for the accommodation of plants of comparatively dwarf growth. They are so small in size that a very little fuel will serve to maintain a temperature of 60°, which will be sufficient for all purposes, and in severe weather they can be covered with mats or canvas to keep in the heat. I should propose that the house be cleared out early in September, and then undergo a thorough cleansing, and a fire started. A house of this kind will be of immense service. It will afford just the accommodation required by *Coleus*, *Alternantheras*, and other tender bedders, during the winter, and for a large number of winter flowering plants, such as *Bouvardias*, *Epiphyllums*, *Salvias*, and *Gesneras*, which require a higher temperature than that of an ordinary greenhouse; nothing better could well be desired. In several gardens I have seen these small houses turned to wonderfully good account, and a very nice lot of stove plants kept together. It is simply a question of cost in providing the fuel for the maintenance of the temperature, and this at the present moment is a serious consideration.

Just to show the great usefulness of a house of this kind, I will proceed to point out a few of the most valuable plants that may be most successfully grown in it.

Epiphyllum truncatum, of which there is a considerable number of really splendid varieties, usually produces its showy flowers about Christmas, and is one of the best winter subjects. It is hardy enough

to be grown in a greenhouse during the summer season; but when kept in that temperature all the year round the plants do not make the new growth early enough in the season to admit of its being well matured by the autumn. With the aid of the temperature above alluded to they will commence to make new growth early, and the following season bloom superbly. The warmth is required to bring out the flowers at mid-winter, and to encourage the new growth, which begins to push soon after the flowers are faded. During the summer a sunny position in the greenhouse, with moderate supplies of water at the root until July, will be all that they require, and after the last-mentioned month they still require a roasting situation, but with little or no water.

Bouvardia jasminioides, *B. longiflora*, *B. Vreelandi*, *B. Hogarth*, and several others, are most beautiful, and the flowers are unsurpassed for bouquets. These can be grown in a warm, sunny situation out of doors during the summer, and if lifted carefully, potted, and put in a genial temperature, they will flower superbly throughout the winter. The main points in managing them in this rough-and-ready way is to put them out in well-tilled soil, to keep them stopped, to promote the formation of neat bushes, and prevent their exhaustion by the production of their flowers when they are not required. They must not be stopped during the last six weeks or two months they are in the open ground, for it is most important that they should, when lifted, be bristling with flower buds.

Salvia gesnerifolia is wonderfully attractive towards the spring, when grown in the form of neat little bushes, and placed in a temperature between fifty-five and sixty-five degrees. The cuttings may be struck in the warm corner of the house about the middle of March, potted off singly when nicely rooted, and then shifted into six or eight-inch pots. After the beginning of June, a moderately open position, with the pots plunged, will be the most suitable quarters for the summer. They must be well supplied with water at the roots, and have also an occasional skiff overhead from the syringe, and if they suffer from neglect in this respect, the lower leaves will fall, and the plants become very unsightly in consequence. They will require stopping two or three times in the course of the season. Remove them indoors sometime in September, and they will bloom much earlier than when kept in a greenhouse all the winter. *S. splendens* is very beautiful during the late autumn, when assisted with a genial temperature. The cuttings should be struck early, and the plants grown out of doors during the summer.

Begonia Digswelliana, *B. Saundersiana*, and several others of the same character, bloom superbly and continuously during the winter season. The flowers are not of much value for bouquets, but they are very pretty when employed in the dressing of epergnes for the dinner table. The cuttings strike very freely at any season of the year, but the spring is the best season for propagating a stock, and the routine management consists in shifting the plants into larger pots as required, and stopping the young shoots once or twice to keep them stocky. It is not needful to propagate a stock every season, for the old plants may be cut down in the spring, the

ball of soil reduced, and then repotted in pots of a similar or larger size. During the summer they do exceedingly well in company with cucumbers or melons, or with greenhouse plants, provided they have a warm corner.

The *Gesnera*, and several of its allies, are amongst the finest of winter-flowering plants, and by starting the roots, with the assistance of bottom heat provided by the cucumber bed, and then allowing them to bear the cucumbers company until the end of June, they will make bonny little specimens. Early in July they can be placed in a vinery, or even in the greenhouse, and allowed to remain there until the house is ready for their reception in the autumn. They will then commence to bloom superbly, and the richly coloured flowers and foliage will have a most attractive appearance. If nicely grown, the plants will be most useful for dinner-table decoration; indeed, for the latter purpose few plants can surpass them.

Euphorbia jacquinaeflora, another bright and effective subject, can also be made to bloom superbly by the rough-and-ready mode already alluded to in speaking of the gesneras. The temperature of the house during the early part of the spring will suffice to start it into a vigorous growth, and the warmth necessary for the cucumbers during the earlier stages will suffice to keep them in a progressive state. After the middle of July they can be removed to the open air and placed at the foot of a south wall. In this situation they will enjoy every facility for the thorough maturation of the wood, and in all probability will bloom most profusely the following winter. Many cultivators are afraid to put them out of doors, but they will do much better in a warm situation in the open air than in a cool house.

Several orchids will also do well in a house of this kind, provided they can be allowed to remain in the house with the cucumbers until Midsummer. *Dendrobium nobile*, *D. chrysanthum*, *Cypripedium barbatum*, *C. insigne*, *Calanthe vestita*, *C. Veitchii*, *Lælia anceps*, *Oncidium flexuosum*, *O. sphacelatum*, *Phaius grandifolius*, are remarkable for their attractive appearance when in bloom, and adaptability to rough-and-ready management.

There is a considerable number of other things which do well, managed in a similar manner to those alluded to above; but it would occupy too much space to speak of them in detail, and the foregoing remarks will suffice to indicate the utility of the house and the class of plants which may be grown with its aid. It will of course be also useful as a forcing house; for roses, flowering shrubs, bulbs, herbaceous plants in the way of dielytras and spiræas, can be pushed on in it, and all the bother and expense of a hotbed will be avoided.
