

PLUMS FOR SMALL GARDENS.

(With a Coloured Plate.)

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THE plum may be justly considered one of the most useful of culinary and dessert fruits that could be grown in small gardens, for it may be most successfully cultivated in the open quarters as well as when trained against walls; and in the southern and midland counties it is by no means particular as to aspect. It is also very accommodating as to the manner in which it is trained, and the majority of the varieties may be grown as bushes, pyramids, espaliers, and standard trees. For small gardens the bush and pyramidal form of training is the best when the trees are away from the walls, and those against walls should be trained with their main branches extending equally in all directions in much the same manner as the ribs of a lady's fan. To some readers of the *FLORAL WORLD* it may appear too early to speak of planting fruit trees; but I would assure them that October is the best time in the whole year for the work, and therefore before the end of September all alterations should be determined upon, so that there may be no delay hereafter. As soon as the leaves fall freely the trees may be lifted and replanted with advantage, for they at once commence to make new roots, and by the time the winter is upon us they will be well established in their new quarters. They will consequently be in grand condition to make a vigorous growth as soon as the weather is warm enough to start them into life, whereas those planted between New Year's day and March will have to make new roots before they can make much progress. Apart from this, the soil is in a better working condition in October and also possesses a greater degree of warmth than in the depth of winter or in early spring, and it is therefore more favourable to the development of new roots. There is yet another point in favour of early planting, and that is the greater facility which exists in the autumn for obtaining first-class trees of the more popular sorts, for it may be assumed that those who are wise enough to buy early will certainly take proper care to select none but the best trees. Holding, as I do, immense stocks of fruit trees I am able to speak with the greatest degree of confidence upon this point.

As regards the character of the soil most favourable to the growth of the plum it may be said that few fruits are less particular as to the soil in which they are grown; therefore the trees may be planted in almost every garden in the country without there being any cause to fear the ultimate results. It may, however, be stated that heavy soils are preferable to those of a light character, and in my practice I have found the plum come to the highest perfection in strong clayey soil mixed with a liberal proportion of sound loam,

such as would be obtained from the top spit of an old pasture. Some few years since I had occasion to plant rather largely on a heavy soil, and I was quite astonished at the rapid progress of the trees, they seemed to revel in the strong clay, and I think that the peach, nectarine, and apricot would do much better were they planted in a soil which had a liberal proportion of clay incorporated with it previous to their being planted. I am well assured that if this was done in the case of the last-mentioned fruit we should not hear so much of the Moorpark and other varieties losing their branches. When the soil is very light and sandy it will be highly advantageous to apply a good dressing of strong clayey loam, but it must not for a moment be supposed that even in light soils the trees will not do without this dressing of clay.

As already stated, pyramidal and bush trees are the most suitable for growing in the open quarters, as they require less attention to keep them in order during the summer season than the espaliers, and moreover have a more ornamental appearance. To prevent loss of time-trees properly formed and large enough to produce a crop of fruit within a year or two should be selected; they will cost a trifle more, but where the space is limited it is much better to have bearing trees than to wait several years. In any case trees three or four feet in height should be purchased. In the case of pyramidal trees, the strong side-shoots which are produced just above the junction of the scion and graft must be repressed, or they will spoil the contour of the tree.

The young growth will require stopping or pinching once or twice during the summer; this as a rule should be done towards the end of July. At the same time some of the shoots may be removed altogether from parts of the tree where it is overcrowded with wood; all gross shoots should also be rubbed off during the summer. The winter pruning consists in removing the weakly shoots where they are not required for furnishing the tree, and shortening the stems back to about six inches. To prevent their growing too freely root-prune or lift them every second or third year, according as may be required; of course, so long as they continue to make firm short-jointed wood and produce heavy crops of fruit, it may be inferred that no root-pruning will be necessary.

My collection of plums, which is one of the most extensive in the country, comprises nearly three hundred distinct sorts, and from these I have selected the following as being especially suitable for small and medium-sized gardens:—

DESSERT.—*Apricot, Liegal's.*—A medium-sized fruit, of a greenish yellow colour, and fine piquant flavour; ripe in September.

Coe's Golden Drop.—A handsome yellow fruit, of large size, and delicious flavour; ripe in October.

Denniston's Superb.—A first-rate, medium-sized fruit, equal in flavour to the greengage; August.

Drap d'Or.—An excellent little yellow fruit; ripe in August.

Early Prolific, Hubbard's.—A valuable purple fruit, ripening the second week in July. Also useful for culinary purposes.

Early Prolific, Rivers's.—Like the preceding; valuable for its earliness; the tree is a great bearer.

Empress Eugenie.—A fine, large, dark plum, of the most luscious flavour, most useful for cooking; ripe middle of August.

Gage, Bryanston.—A good, late, and rather large form of the greengage; ripe in October.

Gage, Green.—A well known and delicious variety.

Gage, July Green.—A valuable form of the greengage, ripening in July.

Gage, Purple.—A fine purple fruit, of medium size, and rich flavour; ripe in October, but if allowed to hang until shrivelled it is most delicious.

Gage, Red.—A valuable American variety; the fruit is of medium size and good flavour, and the tree a prodigious bearer.

Golden, Lawson's.—A medium-sized yellow fruit ripening in September, the tree is very hardy, and a good bearer.

Guthrie's Late Green.—A fine, large, yellow-green fruit, of a rich sugary flavour; ripe in September.

Impératrice Blue.—A fine, late, purple fruit; which is most delicious if allowed to hang until shrivelled.

Jaune Hâtive.—A pretty, little, dark fruit; ripe in July.

Jefferson.—A large, richly flavoured, yellow fruit, of great beauty; ripe in September.

Kirke's.—A large, handsome fruit, of a deep purple colour, and delicious flavour; tree hardy, and great bearer; ripe in September.

Lawrence's Favourite.—A fine, handsome, brisk-flavoured fruit, of a yellowish-green colour; ripe in September.

Morocco.—An excellent, dark-coloured fruit; ripe in August.

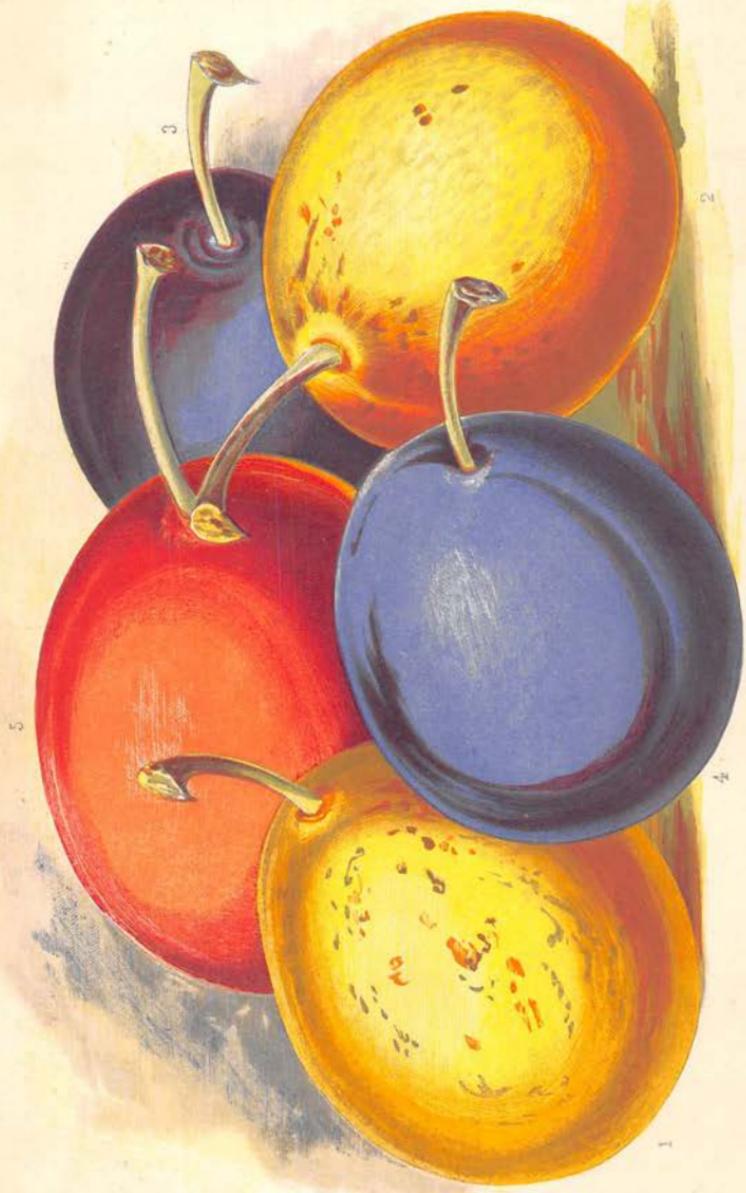
Precoce de Bergethola.—A useful, little, yellow plum; ripening in July.

Reine Claude Violette.—A large, handsome, purple fruit, of the most exquisite flavour.

KITCHEN. — The undermentioned are the most valuable for cooking, and are arranged in the order in which they ripen:—*Early Prolific, Early Orleans, Prince of Wales, Victoria, Diamond, and Autumn Compote*; the various forms of greengage are also most excellent in pies and tarts. For preserving, the undermentioned can be strongly recommended for their fine flavour and rich colour:—*Greengage, White Magnum Bonum, Diamond, Victoria, Winesour, Damson, and Autumn Compote*.

WE learn from M. de Candolle that the 18th, and final volume of the "Prodrômus" is in the press. To it will be added a general index of the generic names included in the whole book. The entire work comprises the description of 59,000 species of plants, of which 11,790 are described therein for the first time. The "Prodrômus" was commenced in 1824, by Auguste Pyramus de Candolle, and has been continued, since his death, under the editorship of Alphonse de Candolle, who has himself contributed many of the monographs of various orders, as has also his son, Casimer, the grandson of the original projector.

September.



PLUMS.

- 1. Coe's Golden Drop.
- 2. Jefferson's.
- 3. Reine Claude Violette.
- 4. Kinke's.
- 5. Victoria