

GAY GARDENS IN SPRING.

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MUCH has been said in the pages of the FLORAL WORLD in advocacy of spring flowers, and in pointing out the way by which the flower-garden may be made to present a gay and festive appearance during the spring months, it is not needful to say a word in praise of the materials with which this desirable result can be produced. Spring flowers are, to my mind, as necessary as those flowering in summer; and there is really no material difference between the flower-beds being bare during the spring and summer months, for it is just as easy to have them gay at one time as the other. Indeed, if there is any difference, the spring season has the advantage, for all the spring bedders are of necessity perfectly hardy, and may be grown by those who have not any glass whatever in the garden. They are also so easily propagated that with but little difficulty they can be multiplied in any quantity by the amateur possessing but a small knowledge of plant culture. It must, however, be understood that having the flower-garden gay in spring as well as in summer, a double amount of work will be necessary, and a reserve ground, in proportion to the number and size of the beds, will be required for the accommodation of the plants during the summer.

The cultural details will be as brief as possible; but I hope, by arranging them under separate headings, to convey all the information required for making a satisfactory commencement. It may also be observed that in the garden here we employ the leading kinds by thousands; but the routine culture of a dozen is just the same as of a thousand.

ALYSSUM.—The yellow-flowered *A. saxatile compactum* is the best golden spring-bedder we have, and can be propagated from cuttings or seeds. The side-shoots, stripped off and inserted in a sandy soil, in a shady place, strike freely. The seed can be sown in the open border, or in boxes and placed in a frame. July is a capital month for sowing the seed and striking the cuttings; but the plants will require a year's growth before they will be available for the flower-garden. Therefore, when removed from the cutting-pot or seed-bed, plant them in nursery-beds, at a distance of four inches apart, in rows nine or twelve inches from each other. Excepting keeping them clear of weeds, they will require no further attention until they are removed to their winter quarters.

ARABIS.—The free-flowering *A. albida* forms attractive masses of the purest white, and is remarkably accommodating, for tufts, even without roots, planted in the autumn will flower very freely. It, however, cannot be strongly recommended; for it blooms before any of the other things, and its beauty is gone before the main portion of the spring flowers are fairly in bloom. Plants broken-up and

planted in shallow trenches will become well established and form nice tufts by the autumn. The variegated form of the above is useful for edgings on dry soils, and can be increased in the same manner.

AUBRIETIA.—The best of these for spring bedding are *A. deltoidea grandiflora* and *A. græca*, both of which produce purplish lilac flowers. They only attain a height of a few inches, and are best adapted for edgings. Puled to pieces now and planted as advised for the Arabis, firm, compact clumps will be the result. Unless they are divided and replanted annually as here directed, they become straggling, and it is difficult to plant them neatly.

CERASTIUM.—The downy-leaved *S. tomentosum* makes capital edgings, provided good tufts are planted. When the cerastium is employed for edging purposes during the summer, it should not, unless unsuitable in the spring arrangements, be disturbed in the autumn, but, instead, trimmed slightly, to prevent the band becoming irregular.

DAISIES.—These are most useful, especially for small gardens. They are readily increased, and are very neat and effective in appearance. All the attention required is to divide the clumps, when removed from the flower-beds, and plant them nearly close together, in rows about six inches apart, and in the autumn they can be lifted and transferred to the flower-beds. As their usual height ranges from four to six inches, they must be used for edging purposes, when employed in conjunction with tall-growing plants; but beds filled with the several colours, nicely arranged, are exceedingly effective, as visitors to the gardens of the Royal Horticultural Society at Kensington during the past spring will be able to bear ample testimony. They can be moved at any season of the year, and when the stock is limited strong clumps may be divided into single crowns, and each piece will make a nice plant by the autumn. The *Double White* and *Double Red* are the two best; but the *Double Pink* is useful, and cannot well be dispensed with.

IBERIS.—The evergreen candytufts, *I. corifolia*, *I. sempreflorens*, and *I. sempervirens*, form beautiful masses of white; but, unfortunately, they do not bloom early enough by a fortnight. The last-mentioned is the earliest in bloom; but the flowers are inferior to those of the first-mentioned, both in size and colour. They are, moreover, rather difficult to propagate, as they have to be increased by cuttings. The wood is usually in capital condition for propagating purposes during July, as it has then become rather firm. Take off the tops of the young shoots about three inches below the point, and after the lower leaves have been removed insert them in pans or boxes filled with sandy soil, and place them in a cold frame. In propagating large quantities it will be preferable to make up a bed of soil in a cold frame, or to insert the cuttings in the open border, and then cover with handlights. With ordinary care, in screening from the sun, and sprinkling them occasionally, they will be nicely rooted by the autumn; but as they will not be large enough to be of much service in the flower-garden the following spring, plant in nursery-lines in the course of the autumn or following

spring. To promote the formation of bushy plants, stop them once in the early part of the summer. With ordinary management in lifting carefully, and stopping moderately to keep them bushy, the plants may be employed for an indefinite number of years. In all cases the stopping must be done early in the season, to afford the young wood ample time for becoming well matured by the autumn. Seed of some of the kinds mentioned may be obtained, and sown in pans in the open border, according to the quantity. Two years will, however, be required before the plants are large enough to produce a distinct effect.

FORGET-ME-NOTS.—The pretty *Myosotis dissitiflora* and *M. sylvatica*, both of which have blue flowers and attain a height of twelve inches, are most useful. To obtain a stock, it is simply necessary in July to sow the seed, in shallow drills twelve inches apart, and at the proper time lift the plants in clumps and transfer them to their summer quarters. Previous to sowing the seed, fill the drills with water if the soil happens to be dry; otherwise it will be a considerable time before it germinates.

PANSIES, in moderately light or well-drained soils, are very effective for spring, but in wet and heavy soils they frequently perish in winter. To insure the most satisfactory results, a fresh stock must be propagated annually, as young, vigorous plants are the best able to contend with unfavourable weather during the winter. The tops of the young shoots which push up from the bottom must be selected for cuttings, and taken off just below the third joint, and the lower pair of leaves removed. They can then be inserted in boxes filled with light sandy soil, and placed in a cold frame. Shade and moderate waterings will be required, and to save the labour attendant on the use of shading materials, place the frame on the north side of a wall, building, or hedge. As soon as rooted, plant them out in a bed of well-prepared soil in a shady position, in rows nine inches apart, to afford them an opportunity of acquiring strength by the autumn. Not unfrequently, dividing old plants is resorted to as a means of increasing the stock; but it is a most objectionable plan, for plants so raised are ill able to resist the effects of a wet or severe winter. The most showy and free-flowering sorts, which will give a blaze of colour, are alone suited for bedding. The best of these are *Cliveden Blue*, *Cliveden White*, *Cliveden Yellow*, *Blue King*, *Great Eastern*, and *Cloth of Gold*. The first three are remarkable for their earliness and hardy constitution; but are far inferior in point of quality to the three last on the list, which includes the same colours. *Cliveden Purple* is also very rich in colour and free-flowering, and the four colours here mentioned are quite sufficient for bedding in gardens of all sizes.

PHLOXES.—The dwarf-growing sorts are most valuable for small beds, and for edging those of large size. They give us red and purple colours when they are scarce. The most attractive are *P. frondosa*, pink; *P. Nelsoni*, white; *P. verna*, pink.

PYRETHRUM.—The *Golden Feather* is very useful for edging purposes, and to have it in perfection during the winter and spring, sow in August and plant rather close together. Old plants, which

have done duty during the summer season, are comparatively worthless.

SEDUMS AND SEMPERVIVUMS.—The following are the most useful for edging :—*Sedum acre*, *S. acre aureum*, *S. anglicum*, *S. dasyphyllum*, *Sempervivum californicum*, *S. hirtum*, *S. montanum*. They can be increased by pulling large tufts to pieces in the one case, and by taking off the offsets in the other.

SILENE AND SAPONARIA.—The showy *Silene pendula* and *Saponaria calabrica* make charming pink beds. They must be raised from seed at the same time and in the same manner as the forget-me-nots.

TRITELEIA.—The pretty white-flowered *Triteleia uniflora* makes a charming bed; but as it is not so easily propagated, and requires time for the production of new bulbs after it has done flowering, it is better adapted for the permanent mixed border than for flower-beds.

VIOLA.—These require exactly the same management, in every respect, as the Pansies, and in alluding to them it is simply necessary to give the names of the best for our present purpose. These are :—*Blue Bell*, blue; *Lothair*, rich purple; *Lutea grandiflora*, yellow; *Imperial Blue Perfection*, deep blue; *Blue Perfection*, purplish blue; *Queen Victoria*, deep cobalt blue. The last is a fine new variety, at present rather expensive.

WALLFLOWERS.—The best of these are the *Blood Red* and *Tom Thumb Golden Yellow*. The intermediate shades are very good; but those here mentioned can be the most effectively blended with other flowers. They can be sown as advised for Forget-me-nots, or raised from cuttings in the same manner as the evergreen candy-tufts, and employed the following season in the flower-garden. They should be propagated as early as possible, and a sunny position selected for the nursery-bed.

Very effective displays might be made with a portion only of the above, and the amateur with limited means will of course commence with those which can be raised from seed. It may be mentioned that seed of all the foregoing subjects recommended to be increased by that means can be procured at a cheap rate; and in ordering the seed it will be advisable to mention the probable number of plants required, and thus make sure of obtaining sufficient. The small packets are of course of little service when a large stock is required. The plants should in every case be planted as early in the autumn as circumstances will permit, and rather close together, as there will not be time for them to spread much before winter sets in. Immediately the summer bedders begin to have an untidy appearance clear them away, dig up the beds, and plant the spring flowers.

THE FLOWER SERMON.—According to the *Rock*, this unique service was held, as usual, at St. Katherine Cree Church, Leadenhall Street, on Whit-Tuesday evening. The interest excited by the novel scene of hundreds of young people, each with a nosegay, crowding into an old City church, appears to be unabated. The flower sermon was preached, according to his custom, by the Rev. Dr. Whittemore, rector of the parish.