

ZONAL PELARGONIUMS FOR WINTER DECORATION.

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TOO little heed has hitherto been paid the Zonal Pelargoniums, or "geraniums" of the garden, for autumn and winter decoration.

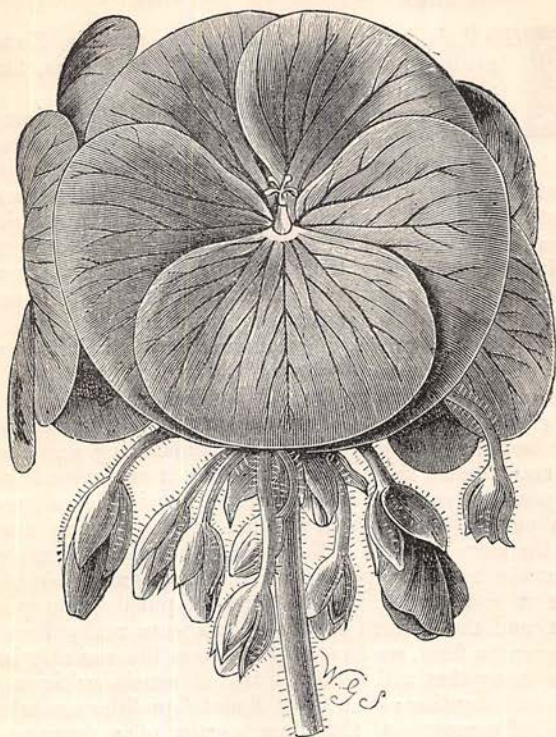
Custom has consigned the scarlet geraniums of every class to the beds or borders of our pleasure grounds and gardens, while ignoring their tremendous claims on our regard as winter flowering greenhouse plants. Amateurs, and gardeners in large establishments, have alike shown a foolish and injurious indifference to the splendid capabilities of the zonals for conservatory decoration, and especially their adaptation to supply a want during the dull and dreary months of autumn, when bright flowers are at their lowest ebb, and colour is the most needed.

Time was, when the zonal geranium afforded but little variety of colour, and certainly no quality of flower. It was then properly regarded as merely adapted for massing for contrast and effect, and not for close inspection. Hence the custom of regarding it as suitable for bedding purposes *only*; but painstaking and energy have greatly transformed this plant of late, for it may with truth be said now to possess flowers of almost every conceivable colour—colours too that put on their brightest hues in the autumn months, and become the more brilliant as the sun declines. It is then the scarlets stand out the most conspicuous; the crimsons and maroons become shot, as it were, with various hues of purple; the pinks most brilliant, and the various shades of magenta really turn to blue. With regard to form, we have now amongst the recently introduced varieties many that will stand the test of crucial criticism, and will not be found wanting; even when florists' qualities are taken as the standard of comparison, these are worthy of a foremost place in any conservatory. In this respect, too, some varieties are even more perfect in the autumn months than at any season of the year. As an illustration of this fact I refer the reader to the engraving of Rienzi, an exact copy of a photograph taken of a truss in my house on the 18th of November, 1872. This variety, I consider, may fairly be taken as the type of a florists' flower in the scarlet geranium.

The coloured plate of Imogen very inadequately represents the advance I have obtained towards my goal, for I started with the intention of obtaining *blue*, and I am not yet daunted, but convinced that time and patience will some day secure it. But I must confess that I consider myself much nearer the attainment of another point of equal, if not of more importance still (as it would obviate the greatest defect of the geranium family) in obtaining a strain that shall retain their petals until they wither on the truss instead of falling, in fact I have succeeded partially in many, and *completely* in one variety. Next year will tell me whether I can perpetuate this valuable property, and thereby found a strain which would be so

distinct from all we at present possess, as to be more like a distinct species.

There is no difficulty in the cultivation of the geranium for



ZONAL PELARGONIUM RIENZI.

From a Photograph taken on the 18th November, 1872.

autumn and winter flowering ; and for this purpose I should choose good bushy, autumn-struck plants, that have stood the winter in 60-sized pots ; shift them into 48's in the middle of May, and stand them in an open situation upon a thick layer of cinder ashes. They should be regularly pinched in well to keep them dwarf and bushy, and the flower buds should be systematically and strictly removed as fast as they appear. Water them sparingly when first potted, fairly afterwards ; towards the end of July, or at latest early in August, shift them into new 32-sized pots (of course if larger plants are commenced with, the shifts must be into larger pots still). On each occasion use a generous compost, consisting of two-thirds soft fibrous yellow loam, and one-third thoroughly decayed manure, taking care that the drainage is good. For this purpose I am partial to a little rough charcoal over the crocks. Be careful of the amount of water given on all occasions after re-potting, until the plants have become somewhat re-established. From this time

cease stopping, or in other words do no more pinching off the points of the shoots, but continue to denude of flower buds till the middle of September, by which time they will have filled the pots with healthy roots, and consequently are in the best condition for forming vigorous flower buds, which should now be left. To secure against a check from early autumn frost, it would be well now to remove the plants into a well ventilated pit, or cool house, and by the second week in October they will be coming into flower, and therefore should be shifted into a dry, well ventilated house, which should be kept at a temperature ranging from 50° Fahr. at night, to 60° by fire-heat, or 75° by sun-heat during the day; thus treated, and by making choice of suitable varieties, an abundant supply of flowers may be insured far into the winter months.

With regard to choice of varieties, observation will prove a safe guide. But I would remark that our nurserymen give us copious lists of varieties—*too copious*: for one-third of the catalogued lists would suffice for every class of purchasers. In some instances they are classified in sections, and also in colours. It would be useful if some idea could also be given of their time of flowering in perfection, for I believe every variety has its season of flowering, as every variety of apple and pear has its season for ripening. It would be a boon if they would give us a list of those best adapted for winter flowering.

There are now numerous varieties that flower freely in the autumn months. Amongst the inferior varieties, *Payne's Perpetual*, *Vesuvius*, *Sobieski*, *Jean Sisley*, and *Leonidas* occur to me as useful. Many of the nosegay section, such as *Lizzie*, *Le Grand*, *Grand Duke*, *Marathon*, *Masterpiece*, *Master Christine*, etc., may be pronounced desirable. In the florists' section of large, finely formed flowers we shall find *Virgo Marie*, *Lord Derby*, *Dr. Lindley*, *Alice Spencer*, *Ianthe*, and *Blue Bell*, particularly suitable. I find *Rienzi*, *Richard Cœur de Lion*, *Nelson*, *Iago*, *Ianthe*, *Rose of Allandale*, *Sir Charles Napier*, and *Jessica*, and very many I have raised but that have never been offered to the public, are more or less good winter flowerers.

If an artistical arrangement of the coloured varieties of the flowering section of the geranium, together with some of the best varieties of the gold and silver tricolors, be made with various foliage plants, such as exotic Ferns, Crotons, Dracænas, dwarf Palms and the like, the effect would be found to be far more strikingly telling than is generally supposed for autumn and winter decoration.

SUMAC, which is the powdered leaves of *Rhus coriaria*, and is used for tanning, appears to be an important article in the trade of Palermo. The leaves, after being picked and dried in the sun, are simply ground to powder, and for this purpose there are fifteen mills employed in the city, twelve of which are worked by steam. These mills together employ nearly 200 hands, and produce about 20,289 tons annually, of the estimated value of £290,640. The manufacture of olive oil is also an important industry, as is also the cultivation around Palermo of oranges and lemons, which is being extended, but which requires little labour beyond the gathering and packing of the fruit.

December.

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PELARGONIUM.—IMOGEN.