

The Planting Month

AT this time of sowing flower seeds one thought has occurred to me, why not sow more flowers of the night? those that open only when the sun has set or is setting, round the house, flowers that distil a sweet fragrance into the warm air. This surely is one point in our gardening that is too little heeded, and one flower, far too rare, is the evening primrose, which that fine old poet, little known except to the scholar, Bernard Barton, writes of:

"Fair flower, that shunn'st the glare of day,
Yet lov'st to open, meekly bold,
To evening's hues of silver grey
Thy cup of paly gold."

I would sow this primrose of evening, which, however, is not a primrose, but an oenothera, three feet or four feet high, in waste places where it will sow itself, that is, reproduce itself from its own seed. It has cool grey leaves, and the large yellow flowers, pale as the primrose of the woodland and with as subtle a perfume, open out wide when the day passes into the night. Somewhere in the garden it is possible to plant a group, near, perhaps, the drawing-room, from which the little cloud of yellow may be seen, wafting its incense to the house. This is, I believe, the true spirit of good gardening, to see in each flower its real significance and take advantage of it.

The night-scented stock is another uncommon flower of the evening, an uninteresting during the day as a wisp of hay, but darkness opens the dull-coloured flowers and outpours a warm fragrance, sufficiently strong to reach the open windows. Mingle this with the mignonette and in a border near plant the night-scented tobacco (nicotiana). The pearly white flowers hang their heads in the sunshine and towards evening open out to flood the garden with perfume. Sow seed now of everything except the nicotiana, but plants of it are not costly.

How true it is that of the many things that should be thought of in the making of garden to live in, this of fragrance should be the first. And, happily, among every class of flowers which

may adorn our open-air gardens there are fragrant things to be found. Apart from the groups of plants in which all, or nearly all, are fragrant, as in roses, the annual and biennial (those that bloom the year after the seed is sown), flowers of our gardens are rich in fragrance—stocks, mignonette, sweet peas, sweet Sultan, wallflowers, and many others.

The garden borders of hardy flowers bear for us odours as precious as any breath of tropical orchid, from the Lily-of-the-Valley to the carnation, this yielding, perhaps, the most grateful fragrance of all the flowering host in the garden.

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A Flower of the Mist.

A FLOWER of the mist, a flower as blue as the lakes on summer days is the Nigella, which is as appealing in colour as the sweet-eyed Speedwell or Veronica and the Gentian of Alpine meadows. Certain flowers known to the writer and quite successful in all parts of the Dominion are seldom seen, the Nigella amongst the still unhonoured throng. Nigella damascena, of which the form or variety Miss Jekyll is the most beautiful, grows wild in the south of Europe and spreads out into a little bushy plant from twelve inches to eighteen inches high, covered over for many weeks with deep blue flowers veiled in a misty cloud of thin leaves or "involucre" of the botanist.

But this fairy flower has many strange names. It is called "Devil in a Bush," from the horned carpels or seed-vessels peeping through the leaf-mist, "Fennel-flower," its foliage suggestive of the fennel; St. Catherine's Wheel, and Bishops-wort, but "Love in a Mist" is the prettiest, a blue-eyed little fairy maid hiding in the tiny forest of sea-green.

Sow the seed just beneath the soil and very thinly, for the good reason the Nigella does not transplant well, and choose some place on which the sun does not beat the whole day, with some dark-leaved shrub in the background to make bluer still those veiled flowers that one lingers over, whether in a mass in the garden or gathered together in a bowl in the house.

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