



THE SIMPLE LIFE

THE HOME GARDEN

Garden Calendar for March

Dig and Manure Flower Borders which have not yet been prepared.
Plant—Hardy border plants, Alpines, hardy climbers, shrubs, deciduous trees, fruit trees, pot greenhouse plants, vegetable roots, Gladioli; and especially: Fuchsias, Delphiniums, phloxes, Pentstemons, Hollyhocks, rock plants, Michelmas Daisies, Pyrethrums, Gaillardias, Carnation layers, Pink layers, Pansies, Violas, Sweet Williams, Roses (if not done), evergreen shrubs, Pot Cannas, strawberries, Shalots, artichokes, garlic, sea-kale, cabbage plants, lettuce, cress, and cabbage, potato onion, asparagus, early and main crop potatoes in warm border, start Begonias, start Achimenes, start Gloxinias, Pansies.
Sow—Sorts that have failed, peas (early and second early), broad beans, Milan turnip, radish, grass seed, various kales, celery under glass, a little cabbage, mushrooms, a little broccoli, lettuce, cress and cabbage, mustard and cress, beet, parsley, early carrot, Couve Tronchuda, savoy, leek, brussels sprouts, onions, melon in heat, cauliflower, cress, herbs, spinach, persim, cucumber in heat, tomato in heat, Aster in frames, Stock in frames, Godetia in frames, Marigold in frames, Nasturtium, Balsam in heat, Begonia in heat, Celosia in heat, Cockscomb in heat, Gloxinia in heat, Peunia in heat, Lobelia in heat, hardy annuals under glass, artichoke, Jerusalem artichoke, Cardon, rhubarb, sea-kale, half-hardy annuals in frames.

DAHLIAS AND DAHLIA GROWING

(Specially Prepared for The Colonist.)



WITH the recent development of the Cactus and Art Dahlias, and the introduction of new and improved Show, Pompon, Decorative and Fancy varieties, there has been a marked increase of interest taken in the cultivation of these, the most beautiful of all flowers.

All Dahlias are very easily grown, but will always repay any little extra attention in a wonderful manner. The newer types are such a remarkable revelation in the form and color of the flowers that any one who is the happy possessor of a garden should grow at least a dozen plants of different kinds.

General Culture

About two weeks before the tubers are taken out of the cellar, it is a good plan to water them in order to induce them to sprout. Just as soon as the eyes show, separate the tubers, allowing only one eye (bud) to each tuber. If there is more than one eye on a tuber, remove all but one. If the plants grow so rapidly indoors that they become spindling, plant them outdoors as soon as possible in order to induce a stronger growth.

The soil best adapted for Dahlias is one which is naturally light, but which has a subsoil that retains moisture. Never add manure to the soil in the spring; this must be done in the fall and the manure plowed or spaded in at the time.

Never plant Dahlias closer than three feet apart each way; four to five feet apart is even better. Place the roots horizontally about three inches below the surface of the soil, and await the growth before doing anything more. When the stems make their appearance above ground, insert the stakes for tying to. These should be four feet high for the Single and Pompon, five feet for the Show, and six feet for the Cactus and Decorative types. Connect these stakes with a cross-bar, one for every four plants.

Just as soon as the plants are ten inches high, loosely tie them to the stakes, and cut off the lower leaves. The best material to use in tying is raffia tape. This is really not raffia, but a material which is quite broad, very strong, green in color, and comes in spools which can be attached to a coat lapel, and is therefore very handy. If this cannot be easily obtained, use raffia, or what is better, strips of cloth.

Remove the first tie as soon as the plant has reached a height of two feet and a half, and retie in several places or wherever it appears necessary. The side branches are better tied to the bar which connects the stakes, instead of to the main stake. This will allow more light to reach the centre of the plant, and will relieve the main stalk from additional weight. The plants will also resist strong winds better.

Just as soon as the lower branches appear, cut them off and do not allow more than one stalk to a plant. There should be no foliage or branches up to a foot above the ground.

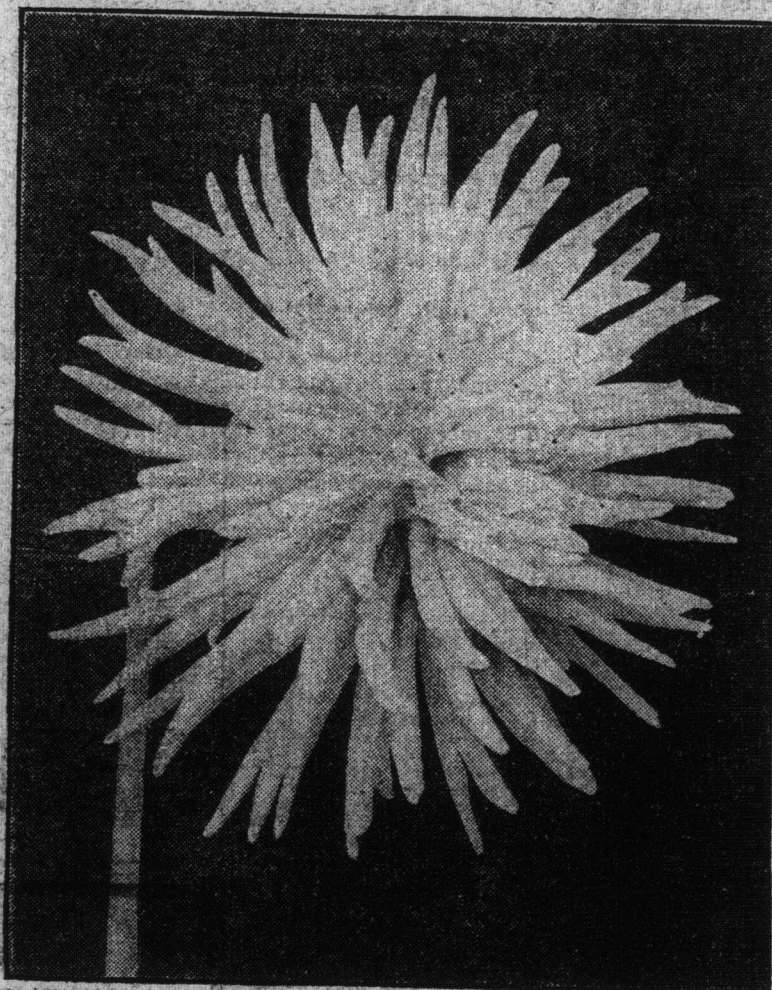
When the first buds show, pick them off and do not let any form for fully two weeks, as the plant will not be strong enough to support the flowers. The flowers from these early buds are always very imperfect, anyway.

Just as soon as the first buds appear begin to feed the plant. The best food is sheep or chicken manure in dry form, which is placed around the plant at first and then lightly forked into the ground. If no rains appear in a reasonable time after its application, water the soil thoroughly.

The first flowers appearing on the plant are usually the best, particularly if it is the crown flower; but this rule is not always true, for the flowers of some varieties improve with the season, while others grow smaller and smaller.

Watering the Dahlia is a subject which must be well studied. When possible it is better to avoid using water at all; but one thing must be observed, that at no time should the growth be checked because of lack of water. In case of a dry season or where the soil is naturally dry, begin watering just as soon as the plants show the effect of the dryness; but never start watering unless you can keep it up all summer, because by watering a growth of fibrous roots is produced near the surface of the soil to reach the moisture, and they will always remain near the surface where they can secure but little moisture if watering ceases, even if there is an average amount of rainfall after the first dry spell; therefore, it is most essential to keep

Some growers prefer a greater distance between the plants, but we have proved the space given to be most suitable. The stakes must be firmly fixed before planting. The best time to get the plants is the end of April and beginning of May. When received from the nursery, they should be immediately potted into four or five inch pots, and placed on a moderate hotbed or in a warm greenhouse, care being taken not to allow the plants to become dry, as the slightest check will tend to throw them into bloom prematurely. During the latter part of May, they should be gradually hardened off, and planted out when all danger of frost is past. Frequent waterings, occasionally with liquid manure, tying and thinning the shoots, will engage the attention of the cultivator till the beginning of August, when the buds will be appearing. A good mulching of well-decomposed manure will be of great service now. If very large blooms are wanted, only four or five branches should be left on each plant, and all buds exceeding two or three at the end of each stem should be removed. A few lateral shoots may be allowed to grow, which will carry flowers later on. When the flowers begin to expand, they will be all the better of a little protection from the weather, a piece of board or tin nailed to the top of a stout stake answering the purpose very well. Some prefer boxes with glass tops.



Cactus Dahlia—H. J. Jones

on watering regularly and thoroughly all summer.

After three or more flowers have appeared on the plant, the number of buds usually increases very rapidly. As a rule, three appear at the end of each flowering branch. If large, perfect blossoms are desired, pick off the side buds.

Dahlias vary enormously in their habit of growth. Some remain dwarf, others grow tall and lanky, while some assume a bush form, making an enormous leaf growth. Those latter must receive special attention in the way of pruning. Pruning is not difficult and there is only one point to keep in mind. Where the foliage is in the way it is well to remove some of it. Always cut off the branches close up to the main stem, do not leave stubs that will decay.

Blight often attacks plants when they are in full bloom. This is easily recognizable by the change of color in the foliage. It either turns light green, yellow spots appear, or the foliage withers and dies. Spray with Bordeaux mixture or ammoniated copper carbonate solution.

Dahlia blooms should never be cut during the sunny hours of the day. Cut the flowers either before sunrise in the morning or after eight o'clock in the evening. Whenever they are cut, place them at once into a bowl of water, immersing the whole stem, and remove them to a cool place—the cellar or some location similar. Here they should remain for at least six hours before they are brought into the living rooms. By changing the water every morning, the flowers can be made to last easily from four to six days.

A great many people in Victoria leave the tubers in the ground all winter, but as we sometimes have a very heavy frost, it is not a practice that we can recommend, especially if you have some really choice varieties. The best plan is to let the foliage die completely down or be killed by an early frost, then cut the stalks down to within six inches of the soil. Lift the roots early in the morning and place them upside down with all the soil attached that can easily be lifted, and let them dry in the sun for two or three hours. Then remove them to a frost-proof storage room, where they should be placed either in a box or on a shelf until the following spring.

Culture for Exhibition Purposes

If the blooms are intended for competitive purposes, the ground must be well dug and pulverized during the previous winter, at the same time adding a liberal quantity of good horse manure (if light soil, cow manure is best). About the end of May, the ground should again be stirred, and laid off in beds five feet wide, with an alley one foot in breadth between them. Into these beds a double row of stakes may be placed, about two and a half feet apart each way; on the average, the tall ones may be a little more, and the dwarf ones a little less.

Some Dahlias Worth Growing

If the amateur gardener does not intend to send away for any of the very latest creations, the following list will be of valuable assistance in making a good selection, as it contains some of the most magnificent Dahlias grown:

Ena, lilac, tinted with violet; Eva, pure white; F. H. Chapman, yellow, overlaid with deep orange; H. J. Jones (see illustration), delicate primrose centre shading to rosy pink—a magnificent exhibition variety; Britannia, salmon pink; Bessie Mitchell, brownish orange; Gloriosa, scarlet; General French, deep bronze; J. Weir Fife, rich purple centre, deepening to purplish-crimson at back of petals; Lord Roberts, white with creamy centre; Magnificent, salmon buff; Mayor Tuppeney, centre yellow, edged with pink, outer petals orange fawn with crimson edge; Mrs. J. J. Crowe, clear canary yellow; Mrs. Jowett, apricot, slightly shaded with coppery red; Radiance, orange-scarlet, passing to yellow; Richard Dean, red, heavily tipped with white; Red Rover, bright crimson-red; Sandpiper, bright orange-scarlet; Uncle Tom, dark crimson maroon, almost black in centre; F. H. Chapman, yellow, overlaid with deep orange; Arachne, white, edged with crimson; Exquisite, pinkish apricot; Herbert Mortimer, cherry red; Beatrice, pale rose; Khaki, orange, fawn and yellow; Mme. Van Den Dael, silvery pink; Progenitor, crimson lake; Prince of Yellows, pure yellow; Maid of Kent, crimson and white; Krimhilda, pink and white; Zephyr, pink; Fern Leaf Beauty, red and white; Rosine, rose; Poes Vigor, Colarette; Czar, dark red; Grand Duke Alexis, white—one of the most magnificent Dahlias ever grown; Edward VII, cherry red; Earl of Rembroke; Eastern Queen, magenta; Fighting Mac, scarlet; 20th Century, rosy crimson, tipped with white, with a white band; Columbia, vermilion and white; General Butler, velvet crimson; almost black at base, and white tips; Clara G. Stredwick, salmon and yellow; Innovation, crimson and white.

Note.—Most of the above varieties are carried by Victoria seedsmen and sold at reasonable prices, but should you be unable to procure what you want, drop a postal to The Colonist "Simple Life" department, and we will probably be able to inform you where you can obtain them.

Rambler Rose Pruning

Sir—I have noticed your engravings on pruning Crimsbn Ramblers in the Semi-Weekly

Colonist of February 11, 1908, and trust you will forgive me for suggesting another way of pruning them, i. e. a way I have used for the last few years, and which I have found most successful.

I have a pergola, and have some dozen ramblers against it. All the wood that flowered last year I cut out to within one inch of its base, leaving one eye to get a good shoot this year. I cut out all old wood as soon as possible after flowering is over and train new shoots up in their right places, keeping one or two more than I require in case of accidents. Any shoots growing on the young wood I cut back in spring (in the case of White Pet you find many). I only keep five or six shoots. It pays one, I think, to do as above, because the trusses of flowers on new wood are twice if not three times larger than those on old wood. I have many, in fact, on most of my ramblers; this year I have shoots 14 feet long, and as they have consequently got crossed, am looking forward to a splendid sight later on. I might add the pergola is of wood with wire to tie to, but the wire is too cold, so I always use a very soft twine, called here wool twine, which I wrap round the wire two or three times before tying, thus keeping the tree from the wire.

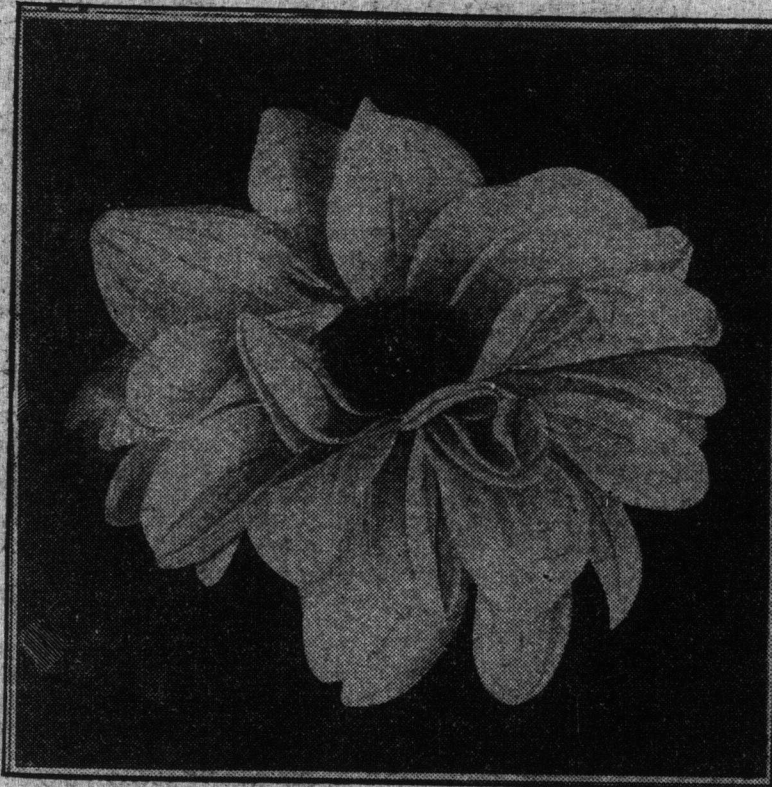
Applying the above to your diagram, if it is a young plant, I should leave about two good shoots to flower and cut the remainder down to the base; if an old plant, I should leave four or five shoots, but in neither case should I top the shoots left. I find the winter generally kills a few inches for me.

H. H. WORSFOLD MAYO.

North Coker, Yeovil, Eng., February 27.

SWEET PEAS IN POTS

Sweet Peas are much more amenable to pot culture than might generally be supposed, and give very little trouble, while they keep up a bright display for a considerable period, and may be grown in pots by those who have little or no convenience for growing them in the garden. Varieties are now so numerous that it is difficult in making a selection to include all that are worthy of recommendation, but for those who would like to confine themselves to a dozen varieties, the following will be found to be a good selection, viz.: Dorothy Eckford, white; Lovely, pale flesh pink; Lord Nelson, blue; Miss Wilmott, orange pink; Gladys Unwin, pink; Hon. Mrs. Kenyon, almost a true yellow; Lady Grisell Hamilton, pale blue or mauve; Gorgeous, scarlet with a salmon shade; Horgace Wright, violet-blue; Countess Spencer, pink; Evelyn Hyatt, orange salmon; and Phyllis Unwin, rose-carmine. The seeds may be sown any time till the end of February, about seven or eight in a 5-inch pot. Good loam with a liberal addition of manure may be used, and it should be pressed moderately firm. The seeds should be covered with the soil. After sowing the pots may be placed in any light, open position in a frame or cool greenhouse; care must be taken that there are no mice about. After the seeds begin to germinate, light and air, with a moderate supply of water, is all that this needed until the seedlings require some support. A few short twigs may be



One of the New Art Dahlias

used at first, and these will hold them up until they begin to make tendrils, and as they advance a few tall sticks and twine placed around will hold them up well. If they are inclined to become too tall they may be stopped, and this will not delay flowering more than a few days. After they are well advanced they may be potted on into 8-inch pots, and after they begin to show flowers manure may be used freely.

The above is the most simple method of growing Sweet Peas in pots, but they may also be grown singly. Sow early and pot off the seedlings as soon as ready, and stop from time to time until they have formed bushy plants. They may be tied up to a single stick. Six-inch pots are large enough for single plants.

MANURING FRUIT TREES.

When the pruning and training of fruit trees has been finished and the resultant rubbish cleared away, attention may be directed to the manuring of trees standing in need of assistance. The indiscriminate manuring of all the trees, whether in need of it or not, is an injurious as well as a wasteful practice; the individual requirements of each tree ought to be considered. An apple tree in good bearing condition with a well-balanced growth may be given a little of the three substances for which there is the greatest demand, viz., a potash salt, phosphoric acid and a nitrate. For the tree in question a 3-inch layer of fermented farmyard manure, placed on the surface as far as the roots extend, is the most suitable mulch, this containing the above-mentioned subjects in well-balanced proportions.

If the crop of apples is usually so large as to be detrimental to free growth, the potash and phosphoric acid must be decreased and the supply of nitrogen increased. A good manure in this case would be a dressing of basic slag at the rate of 6 oz. to the square yard, and stable instead of farmyard manure. On the other hand, if growth is produced at the expense of fruit, the potash and phosphates must be increased and the nitrogenous part left out. If the tree is on a wall, root-pruning may be resorted to with advantage, but if a standard, try a dressing of 3 oz. of kainit and 6 oz. of superphosphate of lime to the square yard, and prune only as much as is absolutely essential. Lime is also important as a food for fruit trees, and no form is more suitable for application than lime rubble or old mortar. It will be seen that the chief point in the manuring of fruit trees is in the variation of nitrogen. I find that a dressing of nitrate of soda, 2 oz. to the square yard and wood ashes (potash) 4 oz. at setting time is very helpful. Pear trees require much the same treatment as apples.

Plums and stone fruits in general object to superphosphate of lime unless on soils well supplied with lime; basic slag, applied in autumn is more to their liking. They require a considerable amount of lime, and this they obtain from the basic slag. Gooseberries and currants do well with identical treatment, farmyard manure is always acceptable, but this cannot always be given them. A good substitute can be found in the decayed vegetable matter from the rubbish heap; from which stones and wood have been removed. A coating of this material 3 inches thick, followed for the next two or three years by artificial manure, is conducive to health and fruitfulness.

A good artificial manure for gooseberries and currants is 3 oz. of superphosphate of lime, 2 oz. of kainit and 1 oz. of nitrate of soda per bushel. Apply the superphosphate and kainit in February and the nitrate at fruit-setting time. On heavy land use basic slag instead of superphosphate of lime, and sulphate of ammonia instead of nitrate of soda.

Raspberries well repay liberal treatment. Digging may be practised with advantage with the previously-mentioned fruits, but with raspberries never. Although they are deep rooters and love a deep, cool soil, most of the fruit-producing roots are found near the surface; besides, if a root gets broken it is apt to send up a bunch of useless suckers where they are not wanted. Nothing suits raspberries better than an annual mulch of well-rotted stable manure or leaf-mould, and in conjunction with these a good artificial manure may be composed as follows: Basic slag, 8 lbs.; superphosphate of lime, 6 lbs.; kainit, 3 lbs.; and sulphate of ammonia, 1½ lbs. Well mix and apply at the rate of 6 oz. to the square yard in spring. While indicating the general method of manuring fruit trees, I would advise every grower to experiment and find out what is most suitable to his own particular locality, as it is well known that the same manures have different effects on different soils. —H.M.E.

A TRAILING EVENING PRIMROSE

(Oenothera macrocarpa.)

This is a beautiful trailing Evening Primrose, flowering continually through the summer and autumn months and produces a charming feature on the rock garden when flowers are rather scarce. The flowers are large and of a rich yellow in color. Several plants that were given a rather prominent position and planted in rich soil have been much admired. They were planted in early spring. The old soil was removed from the pockets and some loam, leaf-mould, road sand and a sprinkling of bone meal mixed together formed the compost in which the plants have thrived. During the summer water must be applied when necessary, and all faded flowers removed. Stir the soil occasionally between the plants. These little attentions will promote healthy growth and abundance of flowers. It is a native of North America, and is sometimes grown under the name of Oenothera missouriensis. Propagated by division and from seed.