

PREPARING PLANTS FOR WINTER.

I would never advise putting the plants intended for winter use in the open ground in summer, for these reasons: The growth of the season must largely be sacrificed in the fall, when the plant is lifted and potted. This operation checks it severely, and in consequence the plant is in a weakened condition at the very time when it ought to be strongest and most vigorous. The change from out to indoor conditions is always a trying one to a plant, therefore it needs all possible strength to take it through the ordeal. If it lacks vitality when taken into the house, it naturally follows that what vitality it has must be greatly lowered by the depressing conditions it has to meet, and the result is that if it survives the strain put upon it it takes it nearly all winter to get well established, or to recuperate, and while this is being done it cannot be expected to produce flowers. By the time it gets fairly to growing spring has come, and the winter's experience has been a most discouraging one to the amateur. Therefore, the importance of having two sets of plants will be readily apparent to the thoughtful reader; one to bloom in summer, the other to be held in reserve for winter work. The same plants cannot be made to do duty during both seasons. I make it a practice to grow young, strong, vigorous plants each summer for the coming winter, and the older plants, those which have passed their prime, are allowed to bloom to suit themselves throughout the summer, and are then thrown aside. But good plants do not outlive their usefulness in one season. If they are cut back well each spring and kept as quiet as possible until September, they can be carried through several seasons and will be found more satisfactory when two and three years old than when but one year old. This is especially true of the geraniums. I know that young plants are often advised; and some

writers say old plants are worthless. These persons do not know what they are talking about when they say this. I never expect a geranium to show what it is capable of doing before its second year, and the third year it will be more satisfactory if one has room enough for large plants such as old geraniums will be when properly grown. I have in my greenhouse geraniums over six years old, and they are as healthy and vigorous as new plants and have a score of flower-trusses when the young plants have one. Visitors often ask me if they are not rare kinds. They had supposed that these plants were worthless after the first year, and are surprised to find how far superior they become with age to the ordinary small plants.

If young plants of any kind are to be grown from cuttings for winter use, they should be started early in the season. Get them to growing, if possible, in March or April. Heliotropes, Begonias, Ferns—in fact all plants except such as are grown from seed—must have this early start if one wants plants of good size. Late started plants will be more intent on producing branches than on flowering, for they will not have reached that maturity which they must attain before they get down to the serious work of life. Roses should be cut back until October. Then let them grow all they will. The new growth will always bear blossoms if strong and healthy. Geraniums should have all buds removed up to the time of bringing the plants into the house. Then let them begin to flower, but remove some of the buds that form, thus holding the plants somewhat in reserve for the season when flowers will be more appreciated. Carnations seldom begin to flower much before late fall, therefore some of the first crop of buds can be allowed to develop.

E. E. REXFORD,
in *How to Grow Flowers.*