

MUNICIPAL DEPARTMENT

THE LAYING-OUT OF PARKS, RE-CREATION GROUNDS AND OPEN SPACES.

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The subject of this paper might not, perhaps, be considered of an engineering character, but the duties of a municipal engineer of the present day are of such a multifarious nature that the laying-out and care of public open spaces in most instances come under his supervision and management, and there is no doubt his work under this head will, in many cases, be increased by reason of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee.

It was the author's first intention to confine his remarks to the selection and planting of shrubs; but in most cases, if a local nurseryman were consulted, the advice obtained in regard to selection of trees and shrubs suitable to the locality would be most valuable, but generally the ideas and artistic tastes of the ordinary nurseryman are not of a very high order, and therefore a paper embodying general principles of laying-out open spaces would perhaps be of more utility to municipal engineers.

It is impossible to lay down any fixed rules to follow, as no two sites are alike in the character of their surroundings or background, in their elevation, in the configuration of their surfaces, or their size. Except in a few instances the area would be limited, and where this is the case the size can to a certain extent be disguised, and the site apparently enlarged by the disposition of the paths, and the position of shrubberies and trees so arranged that when standing on one side of the site elongated views can only be obtained of the grass on the other side, either over the shrubs or between patches of shrubberies. All objectionable contiguous and distant objects, such as the backs of houses, walls, chimney shafts, etc., should be shut out of view from the interior of the site as much as possible by the planting of quick-growing trees and shrubs, and care must be taken that suitable distant scenery is not obliterated from view.

The building of walls, either of stone or brick, to enclose a site, is most objectionable, as they never harmonize with trees or shrubs, and if there exist any such walls which cannot be interfered with, strong-growing ivy should be planted to quickly cover their surfaces. No doubt a wall would be required for the frontage line of a street, but in this case it should be a dwarf one surmounted with iron palings. On those sides of the site which are exposed to cold winds, a screen of quick-growing, hardy trees, such as pines, sycamores, poplars, etc., should, if possible, be planted; the former are to be preferred, as they are not deciduous, and therefore offer protection when most re-

quired—viz., during winter months—and if a deep soil can be obtained, either naturally or artificially, they grow very quickly, and the object in view is soon attained. The sombre appearance of some of them may be avoided by either planting two or three varieties, or intermixing with deciduous trees, in order to obtain a combination of greens to prevent a monotony. A screen of this kind is essential where the site is an exposed one, as cold winds have far worse effect upon plant growth than frost; indeed, the latter has a beneficial effect upon all but tender plants unless very severe, by retarding growth during a period of required rest.

The first thing to be considered would be the approaches to the site, which should be made as bold as possible, and the streets in which they are situated, if not of sufficient width, widened to at least 50 ft. or 60 ft., and the entrances made opposite to the intersection of any street. If lodges are required, and have two floors, the upper story might be preferably built with half-timber work, and have a high-pitched tiled roof, with a backing from the street of tall growing trees, and with one or two dwarfier intervening trees (standard fruit trees answer admirably for this purpose) between the lodge and the street, the idea being that the tops of the tall trees will form a backing for the roof of the lodge, and the intervening trees form a foreground, with the half-timber work showing through the branches, so that care must be taken that if more than one is planted the trees should have ample space between them, so that they do not hide the half-timber work entirely. If the lodge is a two-story one the space between it and the street should not be less than, say, 60 ft., but if only one story a minimum distance of, say, 30 ft. may be adopted. In the former case a small garden might be attached to the lodge, surrounded with a border of shrubs planted closely; in the latter case the whole of the space filled up with shrubs, and if a garden were required it would be placed at the back or side of the lodge. In each case it adds to the effect of the lodge if either roses, clematis, ivy, or other climbing plants are allowed to grow up the front and sides of the lodge. In the case of a one-story lodge, the trees planted for a background should be of a dwarf nature—fruit trees, for instance—so that the foliage may not overhang the roof, but form a contrast to it.

If a refreshment or shelter kiosk or arbour-houses are required, the former should be erected at an equally accessible point from every part of the site; the position, however, must be subservient to effect. A good plan would be to have the kiosk constructed with two floors, the lower story utilized for refreshments, or a shelter, perhaps, enclosed and glazed, and the upper story, of a less floor area, roofed, having open sides with an ornamental wood or iron railing, for the location of the band, as by this means the sound would be better blended and distributed; or small arbour-houses might be erected here and there over the site, their positions being again controlled by the effect they will have upon the other details of the site. These arbours might be made very inexpensive, and certainly very effective, by constructing a brick or concrete foundation, with a framework of hardwood fixed thereon, covered with matchboarding stained a warm color and varnished, and a tiled roof; or, better and cheaper still, a boarded roof thatched preferably with heather, or a light framework of iron might be substituted for wood, covered with strong galvanized netting, and ivy planted round the outside of the arbour.

Ivy is not used so much as it ought to be for this purpose, perhaps on account of its slow growth as it is usually planted; if, however, the ground is properly prepared and quick-growing varieties obtained, such as the Irish ivy (*Hedera Helix Canariensis*), the toothed ivy (*H. dentata*), or the Algerian ivy (*H. Helix Algeriansis*), it would only be a couple of years before such a structure was covered. A trench 4 ft. wide should be first dug where the ivy is required to be planted, to the depth of the surface soil, but no deeper. The subsoil should be then dug over with a long fork and disintegrated, and have at least a barrowful of rotten manure to every yard of trench incorporated with it; this should be well trodden down and the surface soil replaced upon the top and again well trodden down. The plants should have previously been grown in pots at least 40's in size, and have at least 4 ft. of stem, and be planted 4 ft. apart, well trodden in, watered, and if the weather is dry, mulched with manure. As soon as growth starts the leader should be pinched out, in order to allow lateral shoots to break and form low growth. Ivy is a gross feeder, and if planted as nurserymen generally do, by simply digging a whole and putting the roots into it and covering them up, it is a long time before any result is obtained, but if planted as the author advises growth soon commences.

(To be Continued.)

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