

The Decorative Use of Palms and Ferns

A. V. Main, Almonte, Ont.

WHEN selecting house plants of an evergreen nature and of the most graceful and elegant form, palms and ferns stand out pre-eminently. However lavish a mansion may be in other adornments, plants of this evergreen habit are indispensable. On the other hand nothing is more disgusting than half-dead, sickly plants.

inch is ample. Palms occupying eight inch, nine inch, and ten inch pots are permanently settled down, as it were, and benefit from an annual top-dressing in the spring. To do this remove two inches of the surface soil and in its place pack in some fresh compost.

When in need of water the pot will give out a clear sound when rapped on

inside the jardiniere for the pot to rest on. This is applicable to all house plants. The surplus water thus is clear of the pot. It should be emptied out periodically. The correct idea is to get the water to pass through the pot quickly. This necessitates the use of drainage, charcoal, and judgment in watering.

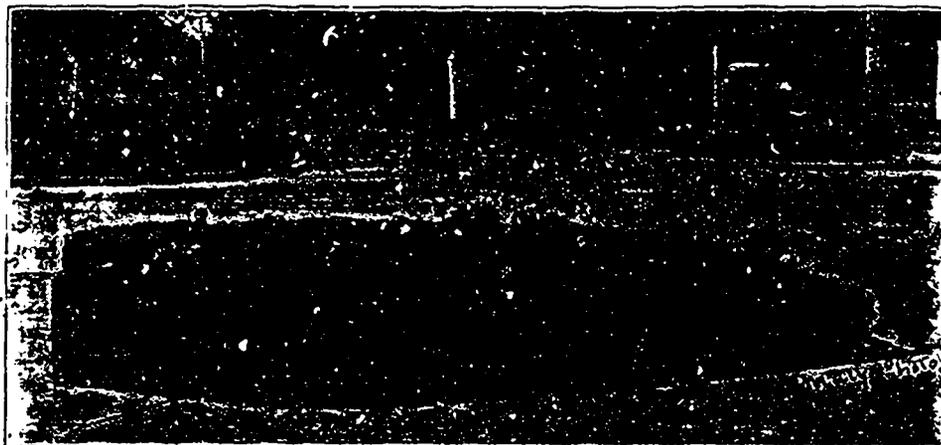
Bone meal or raw crushed bone in the soil is beneficial. It is a lasting manure, which it is wise to use with slow growing plants. Soluble manures are practically lost on palms. We find a weak solution of soft coal soot is the best stimulant for green leaves.

WASH THE PLANTS

Dust settling on the leaves often results in a leaf turning yellow. A couple of such leaves will disfigure a well-balanced palm. At the least, the palm requires a monthly wash or sponge, and oftener if time permits. All sorts of dirt will accumulate on the leaves, which encourages the insects that feed on the plant to its disfigurement. A small piece of sulpho tobacco soap dissolved in tepid water or ordinary soap makes a good cleanser. Preventatives to insect life are better than fighting them after their unwelcome intrusion.

Be sure and wet all parts with the sponge on either side of the leaves, particularly the under side. Sprinkle or spray with clean water after the use of the soap wash. Nothing benefits this class of plants more than a wash and spray overhead, especially in hot, arid rooms. The large, graceful leaves of glossy green hue are suggestive of moisture.

Scale and red spider are the worst enemies of palms. They gradually eat the fibre and turn the leaf into splashes of yellow. Persistent cleaning with soap and water is the remedy, but remember that unhealthy conditions at the roots give place to attacks of insects.



Street Improvement by the Windsor Horticultural Society.

Excellent work is being done by the Windsor Horticultural Society in the line of civic improvement by the planting of flower beds at street corners. Three of these flower beds may here be seen.

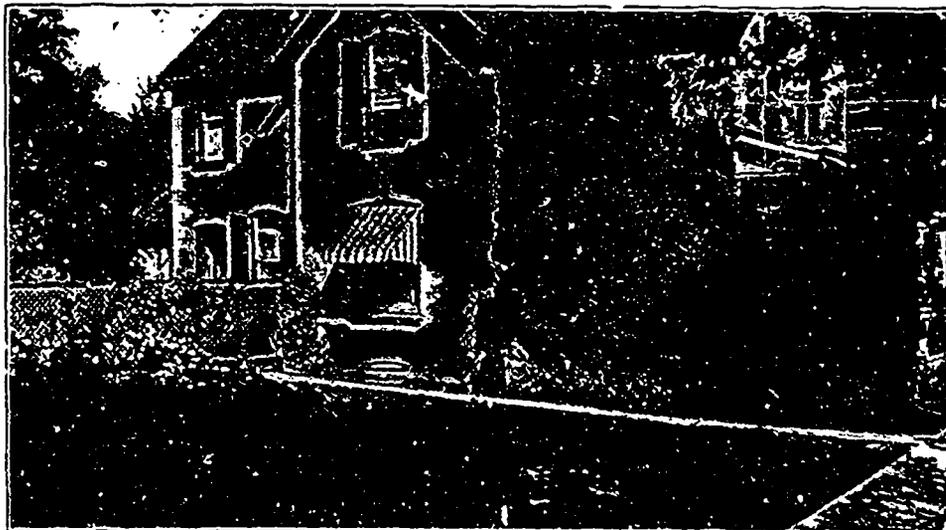
No special care is required to keep palms and ferns healthy and green, but like most other things a few points must be given attention. In their proper culture three factors are essential—suitable soil, judicious watering, and cleanliness.

Kentia Belmoreana is, possibly, the best house plant. Others are Kentia Forsteriana and the fan-leaved palm, Lantania Borbonica. Cocos Weddelliana has fine delicate foliage and is adaptable for a table plant, but it is rather difficult to grow. Palms dislike root disturbance, particularly when in their artificial homes. That warns us to have good drainage and soil, for a larger pot is rarely needed before two years. Reckless potting and fine soil collected from, well, any odd place is not good enough. An excellent soil may be made from two parts fibrous loam, one part of fibrous peat, with sand and charcoal to shine through it, and half a cup of bone meal fertilizer. Mix thoroughly and you have a good, lasting compost.

When potting, use clean pots. Put in several pieces of broken pots, slates, or tile, and then some fibrous pieces of soil. Next set in the plant, straight, first removing the loose soil from it. Any unruly roots can be cut. Have the brown base of the leaf stalk just clear of the soil. Pack it firmly around the plant, using a blunt stick for the purpose. Avoid large pots. When repotting, a change from a six inch to a seven inch or from a seven inch to an eight

the side. A vigorous plant in a warm position will want water about every second day. If the surface is fairly dry and the weight of the pot light, it is safe to give water. By attending to their daily wants you soon know when water is wanted.

One of the worst evils of palms is to have the plant sitting in a jardiniere or other ornamental dish. This water gets sour and in time is absorbed by the soil, much to the detriment of the plant. Use a small block of wood or small pot



A First Prize Lawn and Garden at Brantford.

The home of Mr. F. Simmons is here shown which won first prize for a workingman's lawn and garden in the competition held last year by the Brantford Horticultural Society.