

GARDEN AND ORCHARD.

THREE GOOD HOUSE PLANTS.

The farmer's wife enjoys an occasional novelty in house plants. The old common species after a time lose much of their beauty and should be superseded by newer sorts. To such we recommend the three following species as likely to give satisfaction:

Common Heliotrope. The Peruvian heliotrope (*Heliotropium Peruvianum*) is known to all as one of the most pleasing and fragrant of greenhouse plants. It is not generally grown in farmers' windows, however, although it grows readily with ordinary culture, and flowers profusely. One of the leading characteristics of the heliotrope is its habit of blossoming the year round. The plant is readily grown from cuttings at any time of the year, and if they be given good soil and careful attention, they will give blossom in a couple of months. The plants may be set out of doors as soon as settled weather comes. Give them plenty of room and good soil. They will bloom all summer. Early in fall pot them in good-sized pots, set in a warm window, keep the leaves clean and give good drainage. Under this treatment the plants will bloom all winter. Few plants are more deliciously fragrant than the heliotrope, and few deserve to be more general favourites. The room in which they are grown should be kept warm, however, about 55° is a good temperature.

Libonia. Two or three species of this plant are common in greenhouses. One of the best is *Libonia floribunda*. These plants bear a profusion of long, slender red and yellow flowers. The plant is bright and attractive in appearance, and is somewhat ornamental when not in bloom. It flowers only in winter, however. It can be readily grown from cuttings, if they are taken after flowering time. Plants may be potted out during summer as with heliotrope. Like heliotrope, libonias require an even temperature.

Peristrophe speciosa. This beautiful and odd plant is not common, it having been but quite recently introduced. It possesses all the attributes of a good window plant, however. It grows with great readiness from cuttings. Like the former, it is a winter bloomer. The flowers are a beautiful purple-pink, borne in great profusion upon thrifty plants. In house culture it will undoubtedly be found to require a rather moist atmosphere.

THE BEST VARIETIES OF PEARS.

The inquiry is often made regarding the best varieties of pears to grow for family use where there is room but for a few trees. When asked as to what pear we regarded as the best of all varieties, we have answered, the Sheldon. For a period of twenty-five years our pear orchards have been made up of nearly fifty varieties, embracing all the choice kinds; and it is from this experience that we select the Sheldon as the king of pears—rich, juicy, melting, high flavoured, keeping well for an autumn pear, beautiful in form and colour. This pear is also desirable from the fact that lovers of fruit, with weak stomachs, can eat it without fear of the slightest disturbance of the digestive processes—a consideration of no small importance. It does well on quince stock, as we have proved by

a trial of fifteen years, and is a good bearer. It is a russet pear, medium to large size, ripens in October, and with care will keep into November. It requires a good, deep loam, without a clay subsoil, to obtain the best fruit, and it should be well manured with stable dung, or a mixture of bone-flour and ashes. If we could have but one kind of pear out of the seven hundred known varieties, we should select the Sheldon; if two, we should add the Seckel; three, the Rostiezer, for early summer; four, the Bartlett; five, the Buerre Bosc; six, the Glout Moreceau, for winter. These six varieties we should select for garden planting in preference to all others.

As regards winter pears, we have no good varieties that will keep well later than Christmas. The winter Nelis is a nice little winter pear; but with us it ripens in the cold weather, and does not keep as well as the Glout Moreceau, which is larger and better fruit.—*Popular Science News.*

HOW TO GROW ASTERS.

For early flowering, sow rather thinly in the middle of March or in April, in good, rich compost, under a frame, or in pans in a greenhouse; shade from strong sun, and keep close till the plants come up; afterward expose gradually to the air; prick out when seedlings have two leaves, shade and water; plant out in the middle or end of May. For later flowering, sow the seed thinly in a cold frame under glass, on a soil nicely prepared in drills six inches apart, the first week in May. The plants come up in a few days, when they must have plenty of air, and as soon as they are about an inch high, take the glass quite off for two or three days, and then prick them out on a well prepared bed, three or four inches apart; shade them from the sun until well rooted, which will be in three or four days. Before the plants begin to run up in the stem, plant them out where they are to stand for blooming, in deeply trenched, well manured soil, being careful to remove them with as much mould attached to the roots as possible; let the rows be one foot apart, and the plants ten inches or a foot apart in the rows. If the weather is dry they must be watered until they take root; afterward keep clean from weeds, stir between the plants, and about the first week in August top-dress with rotten manure from an old hot-bed, or water frequently with liquid manure. Give them plenty of water, and tie them to neat stakes as the advance in growth. If intended for exhibition, leave but three or four of the most promising buds to bloom, and shade from the sun as they begin to expand. Experience has proved that the later-planted varieties give better and larger flowers, besides continuing much longer in bloom.—*B. K. Bliss & Sons' Catalogue.*

THE COLOURS OF FLOWERS.

In a recent essay, Herr August Vogel alludes to the possibility of changing the colours of flowers at will by the application of suitable chemicals to the soil. In this author's view, tannin plays an important part in the generation of vegetable colours. It is found in almost every plant, the petals not excepted; and, by the action of the most varying reagents—alkalies, earths, metallic salts,

etc.—it assumes the most manifold hues, from pale rose to deep black. A darker colour, therefore, is produced in flowers rich in tannin, when manured with iron salts, since as everybody knows, tannin and iron salts dye black, and produce ink. This fact has been put in practical use in the culture of hortensias and dahlias. Blossoms of the former were changed from a pale red when the plants grew in ordinary soil to sky-blue when transplanted into soil heavily manured with iron ochre, or when watered occasionally with a dilute alum solution. Similar manipulations have enabled an English gardener to raise black dahlias. In this connection, it may be noted that the colour of birds may be changed artificially as well as that of flowers. A young canary was fed upon a mixture of steeped bread and red cayenne pepper, when, without injury to the bird a pigment of spice entered the blood, and dyed the plumage deep red. It is the opinion of the celebrated ornithologist Russ that the plumage of birds may be changed to any desired colour by the use of appropriate reagents.

PREPARING FOR THE GARDEN.

The success of a garden depends much on its early preparation and planting in spring. Crops which do not need putting in till warm weather arrives, are greatly benefited by the thorough preparation and the pulverizing and enriching of the soil. It is well, therefore, to apply in winter all the manure which may be wanted. Pulverized by frost, and leached into the soil by rains and melting snows, it will be worth more than if spread in lumps after spring opens and is imperfectly intermixed. All new gardens for vegetables should be arranged for horse-cultivation, by extending the plants in drills across it from end to end. This will greatly reduce the labour of keeping it clean, and the few minutes required to cultivate it once a week, will be trifling compared with long and laborious hand-labour. The crops will grow vigorously by keeping the soil constantly mellow and clean by the frequent passing of the narrow one-horse harrow or cultivator. Gardens which are already laid out may be modified by re-arrangement, so that much, if not most, may be subjected to horse-cultivation, and the amount of hand-hoeing materially lessened. There are many crops which are commonly planted in beds, and kept clean, if at all, with hand labour, which may be arranged in drills for this purpose.

PRUNING fruit-trees in winter is practised by some persons. It is better to defer the work until toward spring, but if done before, and particularly if branches an inch or more in diameter are cut off, it is advisable to cover the wounds with a thin coating of wax, to exclude air and moisture. This is a good rule when large limbs are cut off at any time, except early in the fall, at which season the condition of the wood and the dryness of the atmosphere preclude all tendency to decay. But the cutting off of large limbs is always more or less injurious, although trees in vigorous health are generally able to overcome it in great measure. If pruning is done in time, it will rarely be necessary to cut off a limb larger than one's finger.