

SUBURBAN & COUNTRY LIFE SUPPLEMENT

A Year in the Garden

Work in the Month of May—The Planting Season

By E. T. COOK

MAY, the month of sunshine and early flowers, the month of soft fragrances and warm winds that send the life-blood of Nature coursing through every living thing. A long winter has passed, a cold, tiresome spring just hurried away, and now the rosy cheeks of bright-eyed May, who walks in our gardens and touches the not-long-since cold earth with a joyous, throbbing life. It is my wish, and I hope this wish is fulfilled month by month, to make these notes as simple as possible, to make them a living reality. A garden is surely a beautiful book, writ, as Douglas Jerrold tells us, by the finger of God. Every flower and every leaf is a letter; you have only to learn them—and he is a poor dunce that cannot, if he will, do that—to learn them and join them, and then to go on reading and reading, and you will find yourself carried from the earth by the beautiful story you are going through. . . . And then there are some flowers that seem like dutiful children: tend them but ever so little, and they come up and flourish, and show, as I may say, their bright and happy faces to you.

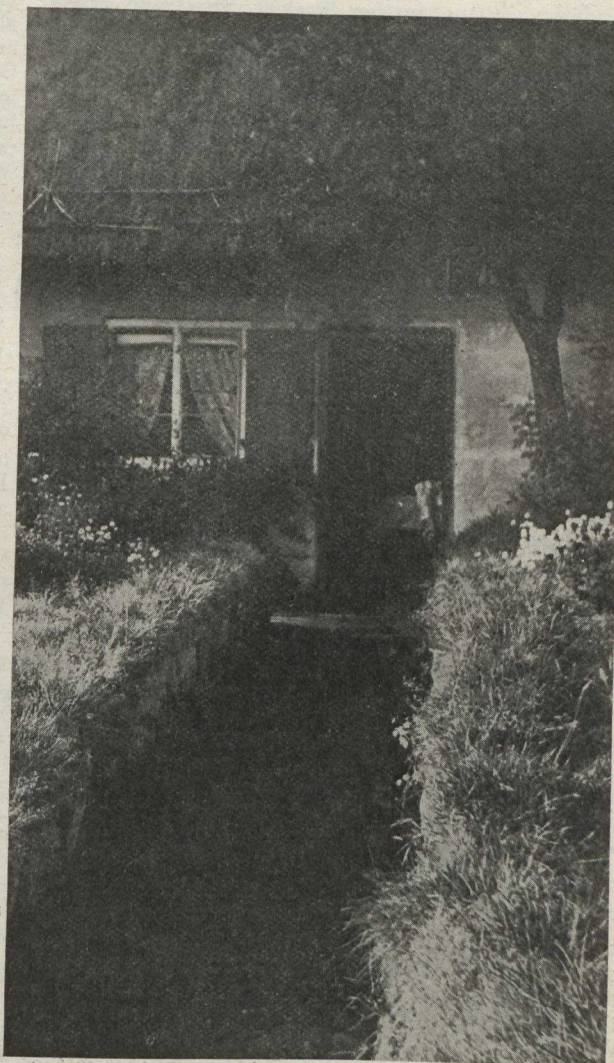
Colour in the Garden.

A pleasant and profitable hour the writer spent lately in the rooms of the Public Library, College Street, where the exhibition of the Canadian Art Society was being held. One picture appealed to me—a patch in which China Roses and other flowers were intermingled, just a natural bit of planting that taught a lesson in the beauty and colour relationship in the flower garden. Is it not true that Nature is the great artist and distributes her flower gifts in abundant masses or groups, flinging them down to colour and drench with scent the brown earth on which we live? Schopenhauer the pessimist, thought of that in memorable words—"Nature the Artist." It is surprising how beautifully and picturesquely trees and plants, even the commonest, will group themselves the moment they are freed from man's control. We see this in any spot that has been thrown off, or never taken into cultivation, even though it bear only Thistles, Briers, and the commonest flowers. In cornfields and market gardens, on the contrary, the æsthetic effect of the plant-world sinks to a minimum." If we would have beautiful gardens this question of colour must be considered, and a few rules of guidance are given herewith. Do not plant in lines or patterns, but arrange the flowers in informal groups, varying in size and shape and therefore giving a natural effect—tall at the back, lowly in front, never dotting single plants about promiscuously, with the too often result, an unwelcome spottiness.

Colours that Harmonize.

The question of colour is one that should be considered at planting time, care being taken to associate only such plants as are harmonious in their tints. Scarlet must be kept away from rose-purple, but scarlet and crimson blend well with orange and yellow, while purple and blue merge into pale lavender and white. Plants that flower early in the summer, such as the Oriental Poppy, and afterwards become unsightly, should be planted before the later-growing kinds, one of which is all-important, the blue, or Michaelmas, daisy, or Aster. The choice of kinds having been decided on, the way in which they are arranged then becomes the matter of chief importance. It seems a natural arrangement to use the creeping and short-growing plants in front and the rest behind them and the tall ones at the back. This is obviously, as I have

pointed out before, a good general rule, but if not varied with judicious exceptions, the result will be monotonous. Now and then some of the tall, backward groups should break forward. Try and get hold of some definite scheme of colouring in order to achieve richness and brilliancy with dignity. It saves much trouble and puzzling to have a regular



The thatched roof on this English cottage may be as old as the tree at the door. The garden, representing more than one generation of care, is probably older than either.

scheme of simple progression of colour from end to end, so that if you have a yellow-flowered thing to plant you put it in the yellow place all in proper gradation. In no way can you obtain so much power of colour, by which is intended strength, richness and brilliancy, as by beginning very quietly at the ends of the borders with bluish foliage, such as the Pink gives, and flowers of tender colouring, white, pale blue, and palest sulphur-yellow, and even with these palest pink, beginning with the softest shades, then gradually to strongest yellows, rich orange, scarlets and deep blood-crimsons, again descending to the pale colourings. This may seem somewhat advanced to information, but is really very simple.

One of the most important gardening duties in May is, when all fear of frost is over, the bedding out, that is, filling beds and other places with Geraniums and plants that are not proof against our winters. Many mistakes are committed in the planting and a few principles may well be set forth, these being much the same as those that govern the border. A combination of colour conceived without forethought or good taste will displease, "no matter how fine the varieties of plants," as a well-known writer once said—true words. No one who has studied colour or thinks anything about it, would mingle scarlet and magenta, but one sees smaller mistakes. Flowers described as pink are grouped, but salmon pink is pale or diluted scarlet and rose pink belongs to the magenta or carmine colourings.

Effect of Colour.

When planting or planning beds put rose-pink only with crimson, purple, lemon, cream, white, lavender or mauve, except when the pink is very pale, when it may go with royal blue or blue-violet. Salmon is a beautiful colour for terra cotta brown, which is the tint of the Coreopsis, with indigo blue, such as is painted on the beautiful flowers of the Salpiglossis, with lemon, orange, grey-blue, that recall the tint of Ageratum or blue Aster, and also with maroon-purple and cream and white. Scarlet is gaudy, yet may be placed with orange or yellow, indeed a bed leading up from white through cream, lemon, amber, orange, vermilion, to a warm scarlet centre is a rare colour picture. Bright blue, blue-violet, or blue-lavender are best with cream or lemon, blush-pink, or apricot, but may go with orange-scarlet or rose-pink—a summer effect, as gay as the brightest butterfly. Red, purple, mauve and lemon are agreeable and the harsh tint of magenta is softened by cream shades. Fully as important is the juxtaposition of the beds. Suppose, for illustration, a lawn is set out with beds—the whole is seen probably at a glance. If the colours clash the flowers have lost much of their value. Magenta Petunias in the near neighbourhood of Scarlet Verbenas form a deplorable association, but there is safety in keeping strong colours apart by the use wholly of white. The arrangement of beds and borders with regard to colour is somewhat difficult to understand at first. A bed of deep crimson Phlox Drummondii, a flower happily of the sun, rejoicing in it with as keen a zest as the Petunia, is more appealing than a medley of hues crashed together without thought of appropriate blending—I hope my meaning is clear—and the same precious principle applies to Art generally and Wordsworth's words of wisdom and truthfulness occur to mind when writing these notes for May. Bedding out, as it is popularly called, is only a form of "laying out" grounds which the great poet declares, "may be considered as a liberal art, in some sort like poetry and painting; and its object, like that of all the liberal arts, is, or ought to be, to move the affections under the control of good sense. If this be so when we are merely putting together words or colours, how much ought the feeling to prevail when we are in the midst of the realities of things; of the beauty and harmony, of the joy and happiness of living creatures; of men and children; of birds and beasts; of hills and streams, and trees and flowers, with the changes of night and day, evening and morning, summer and winter, and all their unwearyed actions and energies."

Some Beautiful Perennial Flowers.

About the middle of May, before the weather is suitable, is the season to plant hardy perennials,