

The Ottawa Garden Competitions*

S. Short, Ottawa

THE effect of the garden competitions in the city of Ottawa has been beneficial, both from an educational and an ornamental standpoint. The city has improved in appearance. These competitions were inaugurated by Lady Minto in 1902. The objects that Lady Minto had in view were the encouragement of neatness and order in the keeping of grass plots and flower beds in the private homes of the citizens, especially where fronting the street; the encouragement of flower growing, and their tasteful arrangement in beds or borders; and to awaken increased interest in horticulture in general, so that the gardens and lawns entered in the competition might be object lessons to the rest of the city. It was hoped also that the presence of a well-cultivated and pretty garden in every part of the city would shame the owners of neglected gardens into improving them. A general and uniform neatness would be the result.

JUDGES AND JUDGING

Three gentlemen prominent in horticulture and amateur gardening were appointed by Lady Minto to act as judges for the 3 years, 1902-03-04. These were Mr. R. B. Whyte, Ottawa's leading amateur gardener, chairman; Mr. W. T. Macoun, Horticulturist, C.E.F., Ottawa; and Mayor J. A. Ellis of Ottawa. The gardens were visited four times during the season, about the last week in June, July, Aug., and Sept. Points were given monthly for neatness and order, floral display and general effect.

COMPETITORS

The competitors were divided the first year into 2 classes, those employing professional gardeners or outside help during the season, and those who did the work themselves or with the assistance of members of their immediate household only. Amateurs were allowed to employ outside help before and on May 24, but not after. The city was divided into 2 districts. Prizes were awarded to the three best gardens in each district. The remaining competitors received no rewards. The prizes consisted of gold, silver, and bronze medals, suitably engraved. The 2nd year, 1903, the percentage plan was introduced. In the professional class three valuable medals were presented. In the amateur class, all competitors scoring over 75% received \$15 cash, and those scoring under 75% and over 60%, \$10 in cash. In 1904, the gardens were judged together, no distinction being made between professional and amateur. As some competitors did not care to receive cash prizes, Lady Minto substituted medals and certificates of merit, signed personally by Her Excellency.

A COMPETITOR'S EXPERIENCE

During the first 2 years of the competition, I personally was not successful in winning a high prize, but I gained experience. Each month, immediately after the judges' rounds, I visited the first 3 gardens on the list. There I took notes of value for use in my own garden.

When the competition opened in 1904, I catered to the judges' taste in regard to grouping and blending of flower colors. My reward was one of the first prizes. Beside the honor of winning the first prize, many other advantages were mine. The garden always was scrupulously neat. We had more bloom of better quality than ever before. Flowers from my garden won more prizes at the Hort. Soc'y's shows than in former years. I had gained a broader knowledge of and a keener enthusiasm for horticulture.

A JUDGE'S EXPERIENCE

With the termination of Lady Minto's stay in Canada ended the garden competition under her name and direction. After the lapse of a year, the scheme was revived by Lady Grey. The judges appointed by Her Excellency are Mr. W. T. Macoun, chairman; Mr. H. N. Bate,

chairman of the Ottawa Improvement Commission; and myself, Pres. Hort'l Soc. Mr. Bate acted as referee or consulting member, and did not visit the gardens with the other judges. In addition to giving 20 points each for cleanness and order, floral display and general effect, the judges this year have given 20 points for labor and enthusiasm. This would give new beginners a chance to compete with experienced gardeners.

On the whole, the different competitors kept up their enthusiasm during the summer, some of them remarking to the judges that they were determined to win a high prize, evidently being quite satisfied with their work. It would have been better for them had they visited some of the leading gardens in their neighborhoods and made observations for improving their own places. I am afraid they will be disappointed when the scores are announced.

One garden that scored well is situated in one of the poorer districts of the city, renting for probably \$6 or \$7 a month. All the houses on that side of the street are alike. About the middle of the block is situated the house and garden entered into the competition. The house is the home of an English family; the mother and children—chiefly girls—are all lovers of flowers. Their efforts in flower growing were very successful and somewhat pathetic. The garden consisted of a little plot about 5 ft. wide and 10 ft. long in front of the house and a little alleyway leading to the back yard. The

An Old Man's Good Work

I have obtained 15 subscribers for THE CANADIAN HORTICULTURIST. Had I received the agency sooner I flatter myself that I could have more than doubled the number, for this is a wholly rural section. The farmers here take other farm papers that are hard to oust. Yet I have done it a little.

To get the 15 subscribers I had to walk an average of 2 1/4 miles per subscriber. I am an old man, 86 years old. In doing this I have done what I desire. I have introduced in my locality the best horticultural paper in Canada.—S. P. Morse, Lowville, Ont.

flowers were grown in flower-pots, home-made hanging baskets and old iron vessels, painted green. Fuchsias, geraniums, calceolarias and other house plants formed the collection used to ornament the little verandah. During the long, dry summer these plants were beautifully fresh, always in bloom and exceedingly attractive, so much so that they drew the attention of the passer-by from the broken gate and unpainted fence which we were told the landlord promised to repair in the fall. In the alleyway, spiraeas and ferns flourished, and in every available corner of the back yard the different annuals bloomed to perfection, showing daily attention. The little yard was divided up, each little girl having a portion. Keen rivalry seemed to exist and when the judges praised an individual bloom its owner showed intense satisfaction. This garden and the happiness that the family derived from it are object lessons to their neighborhood.

The best garden this year is owned by a middle-aged civil servant who looks after it himself. The garden is evidently his hobby. It is the back-half of a city lot that runs through from one street to another. The garden, occupying 2nd place was one of the largest entered. A professional gardener was employed. The third garden is owned by an amateur and is situated on the side of a steep hill.

The judges were instructed to consider the circumstances of each competitor and the size

of each garden. In judging a small garden we expected a higher degree of excellence than from a larger. In gardens with wealthy surroundings we expected choicer varieties of flowers than in those of humbler circumstances.

EFFECT OF COMPETITION

The inauguration of the competitions by Lady Minto awakened a new era of horticultural enthusiasm in Ottawa. A short time afterwards, the Ottawa Improvement Commission was appointed by the Dominion Govt. and given an annual appropriation of \$60,000 to be spent in improving the driveways and beautifying unsightly spots about the city. Membership in the Ottawa Hort'l Soc. rapidly increased. This year the membership is the largest of any society in the province. Larger entries and better quality of exhibits were a feature of the society's shows. Flowers seeds and printed instructions on how to grow them were distributed to the school children of Ottawa by R. B. Whyte and other patriotic citizens, who donated also prizes in the autumn for flowers grown from the seeds distributed. School trustees sodded and ornamented grounds around schools that before were ugly and bare.

A love for flowers has been developed among the citizens in general. Florists' establishments have doubled in number during the last four years. Market gardeners, who formerly grew only small fruits and vegetables, are now growing large quantities of flowers, chiefly sweet peas and asters, to sell at the market at a greater profit than the vegetables. On the whole, the competition has worked wonders in Ottawa. The scheme commends itself to the benevolence and public spirit of the citizens of any city or town, no matter what the size. Philanthropy can find no better channel.

Horticulture in Schools

Rev. P. C. L. Harris, Guelph, Ont.

Five years ago, the Guelph Horticultural Society began its work among the school children. The first year's distribution was geranium plants. About 300 of these were given out. The exhibition in the early fall was very fine, but in the distribution several varieties were used, and this resulted in a lack of uniformity. Some plants were free bloomers; others were slow, etc. The second year, and in 1905, we distributed the seed of Semple's Branching aster. The first time about 500 packets were distributed, while in 1905, about 926 packets were given to the boys and girls of the public and separate schools. The exhibition in 1905 was not proportionately as good as that of the year before, which was exceedingly fine. Last year geraniums were again distributed, all of one variety, and about 500 pots in all.

It is very difficult to estimate the results of the work; that can be better done after further trial. There are, however, some evidences of good accomplished. The prizes given for these competitions have been mostly bulbs, and many of the children are beginning to take a good deal of interest in the growing of bulbs of different varieties and are succeeding well.

Such competitions will inspire a love for the beautiful in plant life, both for the house and garden. The full results will be seen after many days. It pays.

Have you a friend who you think would like to take THE CANADIAN HORTICULTURIST? Send us his name and we will gladly send him a specimen copy. "The More the Merrier!"

I renew with pleasure my subscription to THE CANADIAN HORTICULTURIST, which I have taken for the past 20 years. Throughout these years I have learned many useful things from its pages, and expect to learn more as the magazine grows in size and importance.—Walter N. Turnbull, Galt, Ont.

*A paper read before the convention of the Ontario Horticultural Association recently held in Toronto