



The Flower Garden.

THE growing taste for flowers—the desire to make home cheerful and attractive by surrounding it with ornamental trees and plants—is one of the most cheering indications of our rural progress. Who passes a farm-house, built of logs though it may be, around which even a few flowers and flowering shrubs have been tastefully set, but is cheered by the sight, and drawn towards its unknown occupants with a feeling of kindly sympathy and esteem? There are some unfortunate beings who take peculiar views of life—views bounded by the narrow circle of physical wants, or the yet narrower limits of sordid gain—who sometimes make their boast, in no jesting mood, that of all the flowers to them the cauliflower is the most attractive, or in their utilitarian conceit, ask, “What is the use of flowers?” As we pity the blind, so we pity those who can see no use in flowers. They do have their uses, and not the least of these is their humanizing power. They refine and elevate; they cultivate our taste, enlarge the boundaries of our thoughts, deepen our love of the beautiful, and quicken all our better feelings.

To the lovers of flowers—to those who, for the sake of the flowers, are willing to take the care and do the labor necessary for their cultivation—we send a word of friendly greeting, and a few hints for their flower garden.

When the frosty nights have disappeared, and the earth has become warmed by the sun, then is the time to sow the flower seeds. Those who can take the trouble to make a frame and cover it with a sash can sow earlier and get their plants more forward than by sowing in the open ground. But there are very many desirable flowers that may well be sown in the open border. That this may be done with the best success it is of the first importance that the soil be made as light, fine and friable as possible. To secure this it must be well trenched. If the soil be naturally a heavy clay it will be very much improved by mixing with it considerable leaf mould from the forest and some ashes with sand if the latter can be had. An excellent fertilizer for all kinds of flowers can be easily obtained by gathering the ruds from the fence corners and road-sides into a heap and pouring upon them the soap-suds and slops of the house until they are thoroughly decayed, and then adding a little well-rotted manure. Fresh, unrotted manure should not be used in flower beds. This should be most thoroughly incorporated with the soil until the whole is light and fine. Many flower seeds are very small and cannot force their way up through the crust of a stiff soil. The first seeds are best sown upon the bed, and covered by sifting fine mould over them, taking care to cover them only just deep enough to keep them moist. Much of the disappointment experienced from seeds not coming up is occasioned by planting them too deep. When buried to such a depth, they do not receive warmth enough from the sun to enable them to germinate, and they consequently rot in the ground. Sometimes the seeds do sprout, but the tender shoots have not strength enough to grow up through such a thick covering and perish before they reach the surface.

After the plants are up it will be necessary to see that they have sufficient room to grow. Where they stand thick it will be necessary to pull out some, endeavouring always to leave those that are strongest and give promise of making the finest plants. If the ground be frequently stirred, the labour will be amply repaid in the increased growth and vigour of the plants, and the greater abundance and higher perfection of the flowers. If there should not be sufficient rain to keep the beds moist, it may become desirable to give them an occasional watering. Whenever this is done it should be done thoroughly not by giving a little sprinkling that will just wet the leaves and moisten the surface, but by giving the ground a good soaking. Use water that has stood in the sun long enough to be somewhat warmed by its

heat, not cold water from a spring or cistern. The next day after watering, stir the surface of the soil so that it will not bake and form a crust, and your single watering will be all that the flowers will need unless the drouth be very severe.

By keeping in mind these few simple general principles there will be no difficulty in raising flowers. We give the names of a few of the hardy annuals, which can be easily grown in the open border and will well repay the needed care and attention.

The SWEET ALYSSUM is such a free flowering plant, although the flowers are small, continuing in bloom the whole summer, and withal is so fragrant that we cannot pass it by.

The CANTHART makes very showy beds. There are purple, white, lilac, and crimson varieties. The plants should be thinned out to about five inches apart.

The CONVULVUS MAJOR, or Morning Glory, is of many colours and a very showy climber, but displays its beauties to early risers only.

The CONVULVUS MINOR is a dwarf variety, growing only about a foot high; the flowers mostly light blue and dark purple.

The DOUBLE GREEN-CENTRED HELIANTHUS is the best of the Sunflowers, and grows about five feet high.

The MARIGOLDS, both African and French, are very showy. Their peculiar fragrance renders them unfit for bouquets.

Of MIGNONETTE every one must have a bed for the sake of its most delightful fragrance.

EVENING PRIMROSES make a beautiful display as the sun goes down. Lamarck's Grandiflora is the most showy. The plants should stand from two to three feet apart.

The DIAMOND PHLOX fairly rivals the Verbena in the brilliancy of its flowers and constancy of bloom. From June until severe frosts the bed is covered with showy blossoms of almost every hue, some most delicate in colouring, others dazzlingly brilliant.

The PORTULACA is also a very showy flower. The colours are crimson, yellow, white, striped, &c. It does not thrive well in the shade, but flourishes best when fully exposed to the clear, hot sun.

The PETUNIA keeps up a succession of flowers until the hard frosts of approaching winter kill the plants. Set in beds, with the plants about eighteen inches apart, they soon cover the ground and make a beautiful display.

The SWEET PEA is very fragrant and makes an exceedingly desirable climbing plant. If the blossoms are cut freely it will continue to flower all summer.

The ACROLYSTUM is one of the most desirable everlasting flowers. The colours are bright rose and pure white. If the flowers are gathered, as soon as they open, and dried, they can be kept in the dark in a drawer or box and used for making winter bouquets.

The HELIOTROPISM is another everlasting flower for winter bouquets, large and showy, and of a great variety of colours. The flowers should be cut just before they are fully expanded.

Phenomena of Plants.

PLANTS exhibit some phenomena supposed to arise from the state of the air, which accurate observers regard as prognosticating changes of weather.

When the flower of the chickweed expands boldly and fully no rain will fall for at least four hours after.

When the chickweed half conceals its miniature flowers the day is generally showery.

If the chickweed entirely shuts up its white flower let the traveller put on his great-coat, and the ploughman give up his day's work.

If the flowers of the Siberian sow-thistle keep open all night there will certainly be rain the next day.

The different species of trefoil (clover) always contract their leaves at the approach of a storm.

If the African margold does not open its flowers about seven o'clock in the morning, you may be sure it will rain that day, unless it thunders.

The unusual fruitfulness of white thorns and dog rose bushes is a fore-runner of a severe winter.

There are several plants, especially those with compound yellow flowers, which during the whole day turn their flowers toward the sun, looking towards the east in the morning, the south at noon, and the west at night, a fact particularly observable in the sow-thistle.

The flowers of the chick winter-green droop in the night, to keep the dew or rain from injuring the tender pollen.

One species of woodsorrel shuts up, or doubles its leaves before storms and tempests, a rule which the sensitive plants and cassia also observe.

The flowers of both species of tragopogon open in the morning at the approach of the sun, and without regard to the state of the weather, regularly shut about noon, from which fact the plant has attained the name of “go to bed at noon.”

The four o'clock (mirabilis) is well known from its remarkable property of opening its flowers at four in the afternoon, and not closing them till the same hour in the morning.

The evening primrose (Ehothera) [a native of Farmington] is noted for its remarkable property of regularly shutting with an audible popping noise about sunrise and opening at sunset.

The tamarind tree, the water lily, the marygold, and the false sensitive plant in serene weather expand their leaves in the day time and contract them in the night. The flower of the garden lettuce opens at seven o'clock and shuts at ten.

A species of serpentine aloes, whose large and beautiful flower exhales a strong odour of the vanilla during the time of its expansion, is cultivated in the Imperial Garden in Paris, where it does not blossom till towards the month of July, and at about 5 o'clock in the evening, at which time it gradually opens its petals, expands them, droops and dies, and by ten o'clock in the same evening it is totally withered.

The cereus, a native of Jamaica and Vera Cruz, exhibits an exquisitely beautiful flower, nearly a foot in diameter, the inside of the calix a splendid yellow, the numerous petals of a pure white, and emits a highly fragrant odour during a few hours in the night, and then closes to expand no more.

The flower of the dandelion possesses very peculiar means of sheltering itself from the heat of the sun, as it closes entirely whenever the heat becomes excessive.

Linnaeus enumerates forty flowers possessing this kind of sensitiveness, and divides them into three classes.

1. Meteoric flowers, which less accurately observe the hour of folding, but are expanded sooner or later, according to the cloudiness, moisture, and pressure of the air.

2. Tropical flowers that open in the morning and close before evening every day, but the hour of their expanding becomes earlier or later, as the length of the day varies.

3. Equinoctial flowers, which open at a certain and exact hour of the day, and for the most part close at another determinate hour.—Farmington Chronicle.

Spring in the Garden.

HARDLY was the snow gone and the earth loosed from its fetters of ice, when the gladsome spring flowers, springing up in the very footprints of Old Winter, came to tell that his reign had passed. How welcome are these first tokens of returning life! They tell such a winsome tale of balmy south winds and coming verdure that we love them, both for their own loveliness and for their promise of sunny days in store.

The Double Snow-Drop was among the first that came to say that the chains of winter were broken. It raised its modest white flowers even while the snow showers were yet falling, in itself beautiful, and beautiful as a harbinger of coming buds and blossoms. Then came the Crocus, with more showy flowers, in colors white and blue, and yellow, many delicately shaded or veined and striped. Hardly had the Crocus begun to fade when the beautiful Hyacinths opened their spikes of many colored blossoms, and the air was laden with the rich perfume. And beautiful, indeed, they were, of every colour—crimson and blue, purple and pink, yellow and rose, and white, of every shade and hue. With them came the Double English Violet, mingling its sweet fragrance with their rich perfume—an unpretending flower, whose odors filled the air with a delicate sweetness. Then the more gaudy Early Tulips, in scarlet and yellow, blazed forth in the warmer sunshine, and the curious Fritillarias opened their chequered flowers in colours of purple and brown, white, yellow, and pink.

And now the reign of Flora may be said to be fairly inaugurated. The Pansy bed has been daily increasing in bloom and beauty; the Dicentra, or Bleeding Heart, is throwing out its graceful branches, all strong with rosy, heart-shaped blossoms; the Japan Quince is a blaze with its crimson flowers; the yellow Forsythia is loaded with its golden bells; the sweet Narcissus shows its golden, crimson-edged cups; and all through the Garden, Plant, and Shrub, and Tree is putting on its bridal attire.