



THE SIMPLE LIFE



THE HOME GARDEN

ALL THE PERENNIAL LARKSPURS WORTH GROWING



THE perennial larkspurs are undoubtedly the most popular blue-flowered hardy plants. And no wonder. The spirit of the flower is aspiration itself, witness the towering spikes and the colors of the sky. For two weeks in July the larkspur is the queen of the hardy border. And in the fall larkspurs give another good show of color though the spikes are not then so large and perfect. Interest in the larkspurs now centres in the hybrids, most of which bear the names of prominent people.

The points of a good hybrid larkspur are: densely flowered spikes; many blossoms open at the same time; large individual flowers; rounded sepals, ability to stand without stakes; and above all good constitution, which implies resistance to blight.

Six species are commonly said to have entered into these hybrids, but the conclusions reached by the latest monographers are so astonishing that I have had the types traced from authentic pictures so that anyone may judge for himself this season which ones have been the most important in the evolution of the best garden varieties.

But first we must understand the structure of a larkspur flower, which is very interesting. The five showy parts are not petals, but sepals; although they perform the function of petals, i.e., attracting insects. One of these sepals has a long spur.

The true petals are generally four, and the two upper ones have colorless spurs which run back into the spurred sepal. These upper petals are really nectaries, and the function of the blue spur is doubtless to keep bees from getting at the nectar by a short cut without cross-fertilizing the flowers.

The two lower petals are generally notched and bearded so as to suggest the hind legs of a bee at work in the flower, whence the name "bee larkspur."

I. The Hybrid Larkspur of Botanists

It is quite likely that *D. hybridum* of the botanists is not in cultivation, and that the nurserymen use this name collectively for the hybrids that have originated in cultivation. The true hybridum is distinguished from all other species mentioned in this article by having leaf-stalks that sheathe about the stem. Its leaves are many times parted into linear segments. The flowers as first pictured were only three-eighths of an inch across. There was once introduced a crimson flowered form of it known as *var. puniceum*. It is greatly to be hoped that this can be recovered, on the chance that it may prove to be easier to grow than the other red-flowered species. *D. hybridum* grows wild in Asia.

II. The Large-Flowered Larkspur—Grandiflorum

The other perennial larkspur with leaves divided into many linear segments is *D. grandiflorum*, which is often said to be the species that is chiefly responsible for the large individual flowers that the hybrids possess. The flower of grandiflorum was depicted as one and three-fourth inches across as long ago as 1760. On the other hand, it has only six to nine flowers in a loose cluster, which cannot be called a spike. It came originally from Siberia.

The most famous variety of it is the Chinese larkspur. In other words, *D. chinense* of the nursery catalogues should be called *D. grandiflorum*, *var. chinense*. This variety has never been distinguished by any characters of botanical importance. The gardeners are pretty well agreed that it is dwarfier and has larger and more numerous flowers. It commonly grows one to one and one-half feet high, while grandiflorum may be two and one-half feet.

The unique merit of the Chinese larkspur is that it will bloom earlier and give more flowers the first year from seed than any other perennial larkspur. To get a fair show of flowers by August it is best to sow the other species indoors in March, but the Chinese larkspur will be covered with flowers on Independence Day from seed sown outdoors in April. It probably has more of the ever-blooming habit than the other species, for the variety known as Blue Butterfly begins to bloom when the plant is only nine inches high and under-favorable conditions will continue until frost.

III. The Mysterious Formosum

I could scarcely believe my eyes when I read a statement by the latest monographer of the whole genus (Huth) to the effect that the true *D. formosum* is practically unknown to gardeners. The man who first described it (Boissier, 1856) says that it is unique in having golden hairs on the upper petals, as well as the lower ones. All the famous old colored plates that call themselves *D. formosum* are referred by Huth to *D. cheilanthum*.

Moreover Huth describes a *D. formosum*, *var. centiflorum* which he says is "the most beautiful of all delphiniums, but gardeners are little acquainted with it because it was introduced into cultivation comparatively late." It will be difficult for any gardener to believe that the best species of the genus—one with a hundred flowers in a spike and each flower two and one-half inches across—could remain comparatively unknown to cultivation after

once being introduced. It is native to Armenia.

IV. The Big-Lipped Larkspur—Cheilanthum

The name *D. cheilanthum* rarely, if ever, appears in catalogues today, yet if Huth is right it is to this species that we must attribute practically all the plants sold as *D. formosum*. The original description of *D. cheilanthum*, made in 1820, is founded on two pictures, showing the prominent beard on the lower petals. This flower was a small one—about three quarters of an inch across. Later pictures that call themselves cheilanthum show flowers an inch and a half in diameter and in 1838 we get in Sweet's "British Flower Garden" a variety with a dozen flowers on a spike nine inches long. The leaf from the picture of 1769 shows one of the upper leaves and we must always be on our guard against these in Delphinium, since they are not characteristic. The most characteristic leaf to be found in the genus is the one which is shown in Sweet's picture, which he calls *D. cheilanthum*, *var. multiplex* and my readers will instantly recall this as the most familiar type of foliage among perennial larkspurs. The leaf is usually five-parted.

Huth says the tradesmen used to offer a *D. cheilanthum*, *var. formosum*. It is quite possible that this got shortened in the trade to *D. formosum* and I can testify that the specimens which the New York Botanical Garden got from American seedsmen under this name are really cheilanthum, for the golden beard on the big lower lip of this flower is unmistakable. This species is native to Siberia and the plants grow about three feet high.

V. The Tall European Larkspur—Elatum

The long spikes that we often find among the hybrids are generally supposed to be derived from the tall European larkspur (*D. elatum*), a plant that ordinarily grows about five feet high. The earliest good picture of it (1756) shows a spike sixteen inches long, containing more than forty flowers, each five-eighths of an inch across. The nurserymen sometimes brag of spikes three feet long. The reader must brace himself for another shock, for in the "Cyclopedia of American Horticulture" Davis says of elatum: "It is probable that all, or nearly all, the plants sold here under this name should be called *D. exaltatum*."

VI. The Tall American Larkspur—Exaltatum

I do not see how anyone can confuse the tall larkspur that grows east of Nebraska with the European species. True, they both have small flowers in long dense spikes, but look at the leaves! The European species (*elatum*), generally has a 5-parted leaf, while the American (*exaltatum*) is generally three-parted. But it is still more significant to compare the width of the divisions. The wedge-shaped divisions of *exaltatum* seem highly characteristic. The leaf and flower from Philip Miller's "Dictionary," 1760, shows about twenty-five flowers, each five-eighths of an inch across.

E'en Homer nods, and Nicholson and flower of *exaltatum* that I refer in his "Dictionary of Gardening" is clearly mistaken in making *elatum* a mere synonym of *exaltatum*. For, even if the European and American plants should be considered the same species, the name *elatum* must be given the preference since it dates from 1753, while *exaltatum* was not described until 1789.

We ought to know more about the tall American larkspur. I shall be grateful to any who will send me plants from the wild for my garden. I should like to know the merit of this species as compared with *elatum* and particularly whether it is more resistant to blight.

The Red and Orange Larkspurs

There was great excitement in 1855 when the scarlet larkspur was introduced and again in 1870 when the orange larkspur was brought into gardens. Hitherto perennial larkspurs were confined to blue, purple, and their derivatives, including lavender and white. The two new species seemed to promise every other desirable color, for yellow is easily derived from orange.

Unfortunately these species, though perennial in California, will not survive northern winters. They can be made to bloom the first year by starting seeds indoors in March, but if one could get fresh seeds in August it would probably be best to sow them then and winter the plants in a coldframe.

Both species have a sort of tuberous root and after flowering the plants die down to the ground. The dried roots have been offered by bulb dealers, but have not given uniform success. I have as yet found no indication that anyone has succeeded in crossing these species with the tall perennials.

The cardinal larkspur (*D. cardinale*) is usually considered the better species as the flowers open wide (one and one-half inches) while

those of the orange larkspur (*D. nudicaule*) remain partly closed. They are also smaller and in looser clusters.

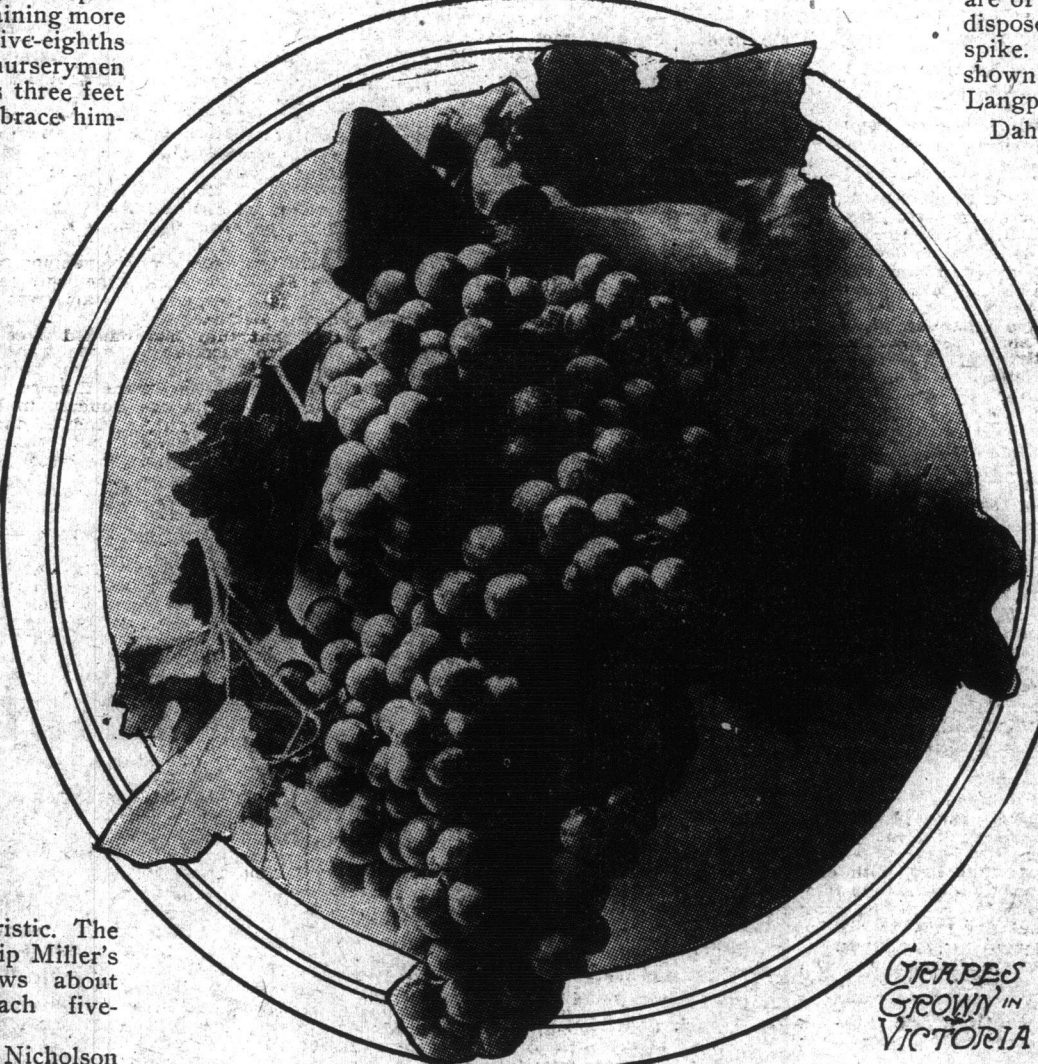
These species should be grown in sandy soil and it might be well to lift the roots after flowering and lay them on or near the surface of the ground under a coldframe in order to imitate the rainless Californian summer. Mr. E. D. Sturtevant says that the roots endure great drought and become as brittle as pipe stems, yet start readily on the arrival of the rainy season. A big mass of scarlet larkspurs three to seven feet high in California is a memorable sight, but in the East we commonly get miserable little plants a foot or so high bearing only a few flowers.

The May-Blooming Larkspur—Tricorne

A May-blooming larkspur ought to be of considerable interest, yet I know only one nurseryman who catalogues our native *D. tricorne*. It usually grows only a foot high and bears six to ten purple, rarely white, flowers each a little more than an inch in diameter. The rocky is a better place for rare plants with tuberous roots than the border, because in the latter situation when the tops lie down, the roots are easily ruined by a careless stroke of the hoe.

The Pale Yellow Larkspur

There is no golden larkspur, and unfortunately the pale yellow larkspur (*D. Zailii*) belongs to the same cultural group as the Californian species, although it is a native of Afghanistan. It is a freer bloomer than the other tuberous kinds but is inclined to bloom itself to death. There is an exquisite colored plate of it in the Garden (English) for 1896, showing flowers one and one half inches across and two dozen in a spike. It has been known to attain a height of five feet, but few people make it average more than two. It would be a great achievement to cross this species with a white-flowered perennial larkspur. *D. Zailii*



GROWN IN VICTORIA

AAA. Seeds irregularly wrinkled, hardly winged—*exaltatum*.

Unfortunately, the doubles produce a few seeds or none and therefore I add the following key, based almost wholly upon the original descriptions:

- A. Lvs. many-times parted.
- B. Petioles sheathing at base—*hybridum*.
- BB. Petioles not sheathing—*grandiflorum*.
- AA. Lvs. usually 5-parted.
- B. The petals all bearded—*formosum*.
- BB. The lower petals bearded.
- C. Spikes many-fl'd.: fls. small—*elatum*.
- CC. Spikes fewer-fl'd.: fls. large—*cheilanthum*.

AAA. Lvs. usually 3-parted—*exaltatum*.—Wilhelm Miller in Garden Magazine.

NEW PLANTS

Through the courtesy of The Garden, a well known English horticultural weekly, we are enabled to present to our readers, from time to time, a list of the latest productions in plants and flowers. In order that our friends may know where to send, should they desire any of the specimens, we will print the articles in their entirety.

Ilex Perryi.—A new and distinct species of Holly from China. The plant exhibited was little more than two feet in height, bushy, compact and forming a perfect pyramid. The leaves are small, glossy green, and quite unlike any species known to cultivators. We think very highly of the new-comer, which should prove of great value in the garden. Shown by Messrs. James Veitch and Sons, Limited, Chelsea. First-class certificate.

Gladiolus Golden Measure.—A valuable addition to the yellow-flowered section, and a good and vigorous variety withal. Award of merit.

Gladiolus White Cloud.—The large and handsome flowers of this variety are of an ivory white tone and well disposed in a compactly-formed spike. Award of merit. Both were shown by Messrs. Kelway & Son, Langport.

Dahlia Marathon.—A Cactus variety with a flower of unusual size, well formed and colored a rosy fawn. The base of the florets is yellow and the tips of a golden hue. Shown by Messrs. J. Stredwick & Son, St. Leonards. Award of merit.

Dahlia Tom Jones.—A show variety. This type of Dahlia still appeals very strongly to the florist. The variety is a very attractive one, the florets being edged and suffused rose-pink on a creamy yellow ground. Shown by Mr. S. Mortimer, Farnham, Surrey. Award of merit.

Tritonia (Montbretia) Norvic.—A showy and good novelty, dwarf growing and free flowering, with much-branched and dark-colored stems. The color is yellow, much stained with reddish orange. Award of merit.

Tritonia (Montbretia) Hereward.—Another novelty of sterling merit, with palest orange-colored, widely-opened flowers 3 inches across; free and late in flowering. Award of merit. Both were shown by Major Petre, Westwick, Norwich (gardener, Mr. Davidson).

Kniphofia R. Wilson Kerr.—A tall-growing and handsome variety with attenuated inflorescences of reddish scarlet flowers. From Messrs. R. W. Wallace and Co., Colchester. Award of merit.

Phlox General Von Lassberg.—If we regard this from the standpoint of purity and size of flower individually, we say at once that it is the finest pure white herbaceous Phlox we have seen. The variety attains to 3 feet high, and when well grown should prove a grand addition. Award of merit.

Phlox Violet.—The name here given is suggestive of the color of this showy and distinct sort, which is the deepest we have yet seen. Award of merit. Both were exhibited by Messrs. Gunn and Sons, Olton.

Gladiolus primulinus hybrids.—A charming new and beautiful race, with somewhat small spikes of hooded flowers, which are singularly novel and artistic-looking in their present form. There are varying shades of yellow, primrose and rose and pink, and these are occasionally combined in one flower. Shown by Messrs. R. W. Wallace and Co., Colchester. Award of merit.

Pteris aquilina Nicholsonii.—An elegant-looking variety of the well-known Bracken hailing from New Zealand, and probably only hardy in the open in the more favored parts of Britain. The variety is very distinct from the typical form we know so well. Exhibited by Messrs. H. B. May and Sons, Edmonton. Award of merit.

Sophrone-Laelio-Cattleya Danae superba.—This is a very pretty Orchid of a mixed parentage, no less than three genera being em-

ployed in its production. In form the flower is midway between a Laelia and a Cattleya, the sepals and the petals being a lovely mixture of dull purple and apricot. The labellum is of medium size, with a bright purple edge and a very rich lemon-colored throat, the whole making a very handsome flower. Shown by Lieutenant-Colonel Holford, C.I.E., C.V.O., Westonbirt, Tetbury, Gloucester (gardener, Mr. H. G. Alexander). Award of merit.

Catsetum russellianum.—A curious addition to this interesting family of orchids. The flowers are borne rather closely on a pendulous raceme and are of medium size. In color they are a greenish white, with thin green venation over the whole flower. The plant exhibited was in a 3-inch pot, and carried one raceme composed of twelve fully-developed flowers. Shown by Sir Trevor Lawrence, Bart., Burford, Dorking (gardener, Mr. White). Award of merit.

Cattleya Rhoda.—This is one of the prettiest Cattleyas we have seen for a long time, and a mere description cannot do it justice. The sepals are lanceolate, long, and of a rich crimson apricot color. The petals are ovate-lanceolate, partly twisted, and of a somewhat lighter color than the sepals. In addition they have a distinct edging of delicate primrose coloring. The labellum is very curiously shaped; it is nearly flat and extends abruptly about two-thirds up from the base, thus forming a reniform sort of fan. At the base, in what would ordinarily be the throat, the color is a mixture of very rich yellow and crimson, but on the broader portion it is rich carmine, daintily edged with pale primrose. Shown by Messrs. Charlesworth & Co., Heaton, Bradford. Award of merit.

Brasso-Cattleya Mme. Charles Maron, Sander's variety.—This is a large flower with a long and unwieldy name, which it does not deserve, as the bloom itself is very refined. The long, narrow sepals are bluntly pointed and somewhat reflexed at the edges, the sepals being very much broader and slightly creased. The labellum is quite characteristic of the family, it being very large, broad and highly fimbriated. The color of the whole flower, with the exception of the throat of the labellum and at the extreme base of the segments, which are primrose, is bright lilac purple. Shown by Messrs. Sander and Son, St. Albans. First-class certificate.

Laelio-Cattleya Elva St. Vincent.—A very pretty flower of rich yet refined coloring. The sepals and petals are of the usual bright rosy mauve coloring, but the labellum is most distinct. As the ground color is very deep rich purple, this being relieved by two large dots of pale and deep yellow hues situated at each side of the entrance to the throat, these give the flower a most striking appearance. Shown by H. S. Goodson, Esq., Fairlawn, Putney. Award of merit.

All the above were shown before the Royal Horticultural Society on September 1st, 1908, when the awards were made.

MEDIUM LOW HEADED TREES

I prefer trees medium low-headed so as to have room to pick up dropped fruit. Then one can gather faster from the ground than on ladders, and I find that trees do not split and break off when heavily loaded with fruit, as they will rest on the ground or can be more easily propped than those with high tops. If they are too low the fruit does not appear to color as well as when off the ground a little distance.

The common practice in our locality is medium low-headed. I hardly think borers would do any more damage to low-headed trees than high. The flat-headed borers generally attack a tree that has some injury on it, sun-scald, rotten wood or something of that nature on the tree that is injured.

The fruit on medium low-headed trees is not damaged so much in wind storm unless it falls from the very top. As I have had but little experience with high-headed trees, I cannot say which is easier to destroy caterpillars on, but since I can spray medium low trees with less difficulty, I should imagine they would be more readily destroyed on the medium low tree.—Iowa Farmer.

LOCAL-GROWN GRAPES

On this page is shown a photographic reproduction of a bunch of grapes grown in a Victoria garden. They were exhibited in Challoner & Mitchell's window for a few days and attracted much attention from the fact that not only were they of excellent size and quality, but of historical interest. The vine from which they were plucked originated from one which was brought to this country from Europe by Sir James Douglas many years ago. Since that date large quantities of excellent fruit have been grown, and the yield this season was in every way excellent.

SPLENDID B. C. APPLES

During the week the editor of the Simple Life department in the Colonist had an opportunity, through the courtesy of Mr. James Argyle, of inspecting a number of very fine apples grown at Kamloops. They were of the Wolfveriver and King varieties and were perfect in every respect. Judged by any standard they would be hard to beat anywhere. The Wolfveriver is a beautifully rosy-red apple, firm and juicy. The King is of a fine golden tint, streaked with red. They measured no less than 13 1-2 inches in circumference.