

Vegetable & Flower Garden.

PRACTICAL DIRECTIONS FOR THE TREATMENT OF FLOWER SEEDS AND THE CULTIVATION OF FLOWERS.

It is pleasing to observe that the taste for the cultivation of flowers is steadily increasing. Almost every one can find leisure to put a few seeds into the ground and afterwards to watch the young plant pushing through the earth, to observe the bright green stem waxing into strength and throwing out its tender foliage; to see the delicate and wonderful bud forming and swelling, which is to be the reward of all your assiduity. Any one who has done this for a season, will find the pursuit to possess a species of fascination, which will yield the purest enjoyment. When farther initiated, and become familiar with the beautiful mysteries, it is delightful to steal into the garden, day after day, and trace the gradual expanding bud developing the unknown glory of a new variety. But the whole process of flower cultivation is so innocent, so congenial to health, and leads the mind so naturally to devout contemplation, that we conceive it is unnecessary to urge anything further in its favor.

Previous to forming a flower garden, the ground should be properly prepared, by being well broken and slightly manured. In the country it should be protected from cold winds by close fences or plantations of shrubs.—Generally speaking, a flower garden should not be upon a large scale. In small gardens, where there is not space for picturesque delineations, neatness should be the prevailing characteristic. A variety of forms may be indulged in, provided the figures are graceful and neat, and not complicated. An oval is a form that generally pleases, on account of the continuity of its outlines; next, if extensive, a circle; but hearts, diamonds, or triangles, seldom please. A simple parallelogram, divided into beds running lengthwise, or the large segment of an oval, with beds running parallel to its outer margin, will always please.

It is necessary to have suitable implements ready, so that the work may be performed well, and at the proper season; such as a spade, rake, hoe, trowel, line, and pruning knife. Labels may be made readily of shingles by splitting them in strips of about an inch wide and five or six inches long, and sharpening them at one end. Paint them with white lead made thin, and mark them with black lead pencil before the paint gets dry. Inscriptions written in this way, will be distinguishable as long as the labels last.

All kinds of *Hardy Annual Flower Seeds* may be sown in the months of May and June; the beds should be levelled and the seeds sown either in small patches, each kind by itself, or in drills from an eighth to a half an inch deep. In about a month, more or less, many of them will be fit to transplant. Take advantage of cloudy and rainy weather; move the plants carefully with a trowel; the

smaller kinds set in front, the larger in the rear; but if the weather be dry and the sky cloudless, give a little water and cover them for a few days.

Hardy Annuals will succeed well in a border of natural earth, if sown in May, but they will flower a month earlier if assisted by glass. If some of the hardy annuals be sown in September, they will become strong enough to survive the Winter, if protected with a slight covering of straw or litter, and when transplanted in Spring will flower earlier and stronger.

The best method to obtain an early bloom of the *Tender Annuals* and to insure strength to the plants is to sow the seeds in pots early in March, placing them in a warm greenhouse window, or plunging them into a moderate hot-bed, carefully protecting them from the cold, shading them from the mid-day sun, and watering them with a finely pierced watering can. The seed should be sown in very light, sandy compost, and the pots well drained by placing broken earthenware and rough soils in the bottom; the finer seeds must not be planted more than an eighth of an inch deep, and the soil must be pressed down closely over them. Water frequently, particularly if the house or frame is very warm. As soon as the seed leaf is fully developed, transplant into small pots, three or four in each, and when they have acquired sufficient strength, transplant into the flower beds; not, however, before the middle of May.

The *Half Hardy Annuals* may be sown and transplanted as above, but must be kept rather cooler. The finer varieties of *German Aster* should be sown in pots towards the end of April, pricked off into smaller pots in June, and afterwards transplanted into the flower borders.

Biennials and Perennials may be sown at the same time with the Annuals of the same degree of hardiness, and treated similarly, except such of the hardy kinds as do not blossom the first year; these last may be thinned out or removed from the seed beds as soon as they are well rooted, and planted, either in different parts of the garden or into a nursery bed, in rows, a foot or more apart, keep them clear of weeds by hoeing and stirring the earth occasionally, which will greatly promote their growth, and prepare them for transplanting into the permanent beds, either in the Autumn or following Spring. *Biennials* are raised principally from seed sown every year. Some *Perennials* and *Biennials* may be sown in September, or as soon as ripe; and if the plants get strong before the setting in of Winter, most of them will flower the next summer. In transplanting, take care to preserve some earth to their roots, and tie the tall-growing kinds to neat poles or rods. Remove decayed plants, and replace them with vigorous ones from the nursery bed. Keep all the beds free from weeds, and the walks clean and neat.

Green House varieties should be sown as directed for *Tender Annuals* in pots, pits, or boxes, be kept in the house, carefully watched, slightly watered occasionally, and sheltered from the hot sun, till strong enough to transplant; most of these varieties may be sown at any season of the year.—*Thorburn's Catalogue.*

Arts and Manufactures.

STRAW PLAITING.

The art of making plaits from Wheat straw was first introduced into England about two and a half centuries ago. In *Agnes Strickland's "Lives of the Queens of Scotland,"* we read that Mary Queen of Scots, when travelling in Lorraine, in France, noticed that women and children were employed in the plaiting and making of straw hats, and in the district where this light and pleasant handicraft was practised, the peasantry were much better off than in other parts where it was not. It is said that the thought struck her that the introduction of this useful art into Scotland would be attended with much benefit to her own subjects. She therefore prevailed upon some plaiters to return with her to Scotland; this was about the year 1562. The troubles in which she was afterwards involved prevented her fully accomplishing her object; but her son, James I., took a lively interest in his mother's plaiters, and transplanted them to Luton, in Bedfordshire. While, however, they remained in Scotland, they taught their art, and plaiting still survives to the present day in the Orkney Islands, though the quantity now made there is very limited.

These plaiters are supposed to have arrived in England about the year 1603, and must have taught the peasantry the art of making whole-straw plait. About a century after this, it is stated that plaiting had, in 1724, greatly extended, and that several thousand plaiters found profitable employment both in Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire. A taste having sprung up in the reign of Queen Anne, and in the succeeding reigns of the Georges for the milkmaid and gipsy hats, a considerable stimulus was received by the trade, and brought Dunstable into notoriety.

The invention of the straw-splitter, supposed to have been made by the French prisoners at Yoxley Barracks, near Stilton, between the years 1803 and 1806, cheapened the prices and created a surprisingly enlarged demand for the plait. It was about 2 inches long, brought to a point, behind which a set of cutters was arranged in a circle; the point entered the straw pipe, the cutter separating it into so many equal-sized splints. Some were arranged to cut a straw into four parts, others five, and so on up to nine.

These machines, improved from time to time, so economised both labour and material that bonnets made of split straw succeeded rapidly in displacing the whole straw Dunstable hat, and continued a favourite article of fashionable wear until Leghorn hats interfered with them. Chips also had a considerable sale.

The great demand for hats from Leg-