

## THE FLOWER GARDEN.

BY E. C. VICK.

[MR. VICK WILL BE PLEASED TO ANSWER IN THIS DEPARTMENT ALL SPECIAL INQUIRIES CONCERNING FLOWER CULTURE. LETTERS TO HIM MAY BE SENT IN CARE OF THE EDITOR OF THE DELINEATOR.]

September is a busy month with the lover of flowers, so much enjoyment and pleasure depending upon the forethought of the gardener and the amount of work accomplished during this and the following month. A little neglect of matters which should be attended to now may cost those who live in the North the loss of many of their most cherished Winter-blooming plants.

A humorist declares that the way to make a short Winter is to give a note in the Fall due the next Spring. I can suggest a much better and pleasanter way. It is to keep plenty of Winter and Spring flowering plants in the house. By "plenty" I mean just as many as one can care for properly. Better succeed with one plant than have a hundred neglected, dilapidated, sorry-looking ones. A few healthy plants—and they will be healthy and thrifty if but a little attention is bestowed upon them—will, in their gratitude, give forth a profusion of bloom to cheer and encourage their care-taker. The amateur should keep this advice in mind, as I believe the principal source of failure lies in commencing with more plants than one can properly care for. Start with a few this year and add to them from time to time as you gain confidence by experience.

There are a few important points necessary to keep in mind. First of all, plants must have light, and most plants sunlight; therefore, a window facing the South should, if possible, be selected for the window garden. Plants require fresh air just as do human beings, and it seems to produce the same effect upon them. A plant housed up without fresh air soon becomes pale, weak and dies, while direct draughts of cold air are equally fatal. A little outside air should be admitted to the room during the middle or warmest part of the Winter day, in such a way as not to greatly reduce the temperature and without allowing a direct draught to strike the plants. Water should be given every day, unless the soil happens to be sufficiently moist from the previous watering. Do not keep saucers under the pots unless it is actually necessary to save the carpets. I believe this practice is the direct cause of a great percentage of the amateur gardener's losses. Water standing in the saucers keeps the soil in the pots soggy, a condition few plants will stand. If saucers are used, care should be taken either to empty them when the water has drained through, or to water so carefully that there is but little or no excess of moisture. It is true there are exceptions to nearly every rule above mentioned. We have plants—the palms, for instance—that thrive with little or no direct sunlight, preferring a shaded position. Others, like the *cyperus alternifolius*, thrive in a soil continually soaked with water.

One of the first things to be done this month is to select the Holland bulbs, more commonly called "Fall bulbs," wanted both for indoor and outdoor planting, and send the order for them to a reliable seedsman or florist. This should be done as early as possible, since these bulbs must be planted during October or November, whether for Winter flowering in the house or for flowering in the garden the following Spring. The bulbs are imported and frequently the dealers sell out and are unable to supply orders sent late in the Fall. These bulbs are just now very cheap and a grand display can be made at small cost. For pot culture, any good garden soil will answer for Autumn bulbs. If the soil is somewhat sandy or porous and rather rich, it will best contribute to a healthy growth. After planting and before Winter sets in cover the beds out of doors with a good dressing of leaves, say five, six or more inches deep, and over this throw a little brush, earth or manure, to prevent the leaves blowing off. Coarse manure will answer in place of leaves. In the Spring rake off the covering, taking off about one-half at first, and then wait about a week before removing the remainder. Remove all flowers as they fade.

The hyacinth, narcissus and crocus will grow in glasses of water, special glasses for the purpose being sold by the seedsman, but pot culture is more natural and affords better results. Tulips are excellent pot plants, most of the early single varieties being suitable for the purpose.

An excellent plan is to plant a variety of bulbs in one box. Take a common wooden box of any desired size and about

eight inches deep. It may be ornamented by painting it or by covering the surface with split sticks from which the bark has not been removed. Fill the box with good garden soil mixed with a little sand to improve the drainage and to keep it from becoming packed or heavy by frequent watering. The box may be planted with bulbs of a single kind or of several varieties, planting the tall-growing sorts in the center surrounded by the lower kinds. When the box has been planted place it in a cool, dark place, watering frequently to prevent the soil from becoming dry. About the last of November or the first of December place the box in the window of a moderately cool room, and the flowers will then mature slowly and keep in perfection a long time. If forced forward in a temperature averaging 70 to 75 degrees, they will bloom too early and soon fade. By filling a number of boxes in this way and bringing them into the light several weeks apart, a continuous succession of blooms may be had throughout the season, as the bulbs when planted and kept in a cool, dark place lie dormant until brought out into the light and a warmer temperature. This is also true of bulbs grown in water. The water should be kept just below the base of the bulb, not nearer to it than an eighth of an inch, and should be changed as it becomes discolored. As soon as the flowers begin to fade they should be removed. The bulbs should then be planted in earth, as they will answer for the garden, though they cannot be flowered in water twice with good results.

With the exception of lilies, all Autumn bulbs should be taken up as soon as the leaves become brown and put away until the next planting time. When the bulbs are taken up, allow them to ripen in the shade for a few days; then remove the tops and roots and put them away in a cool place until wanted again for planting.

Hyacinths planted in the open ground should be set three or four inches below the surface, while for house culture half of the bulb should be allowed to remain above the top of the soil. Roman hyacinths are the earliest, flowering about the holidays. They are very beautiful and deservedly popular.

Tulips should be planted about five inches apart and three inches deep in the garden, and about half as deep for house culture.

The crocus is one of the first flowers of Spring in the Northern States, the bulbs throwing up their leaves before the frost is fairly gone, and their flowers bursting forth in March and April. Plant in the garden at least two inches deep. The crocus flowers well in the house in Winter and the bulbs may be planted as closely together as possible. As the blooms endure but for a short time, they are not as great favorites as other bulb flowers for window gardens.

The *galanthus*, or snowdrop, is the first flower of Spring, beautiful, delicate, pure white and flowering about the first of March. The bulbs should be planted in clusters about two inches deep and about the same distance apart. For the house, plant about a dozen in a small pot. A few snow-drops and crocuses planted on the lawn give a refreshing effect in the early Spring and mowing does not effect the bulbs, as the leaves ripen before the grass needs cutting.

The narcissus, including the well known daffodil and jonquil, is a fine early-blooming Fall bulb. Most of the varieties are hardy and may be set out in the Autumn, like the hyacinth, and allowed to remain in the ground for years. The polyanthus narcissus, known as the Chinese Sacred Lily and the Chinese National Flower, is not quite hardy in this climate, unless planted in sandy soil and well covered before Winter, and even then it may fail. For flowering in pots in the house, or in dishes of water partly filled with gravel, nothing is more satisfactory.

During this month in Northern latitudes one should remove tender plants from the flower bed to the house. Callas, lantanas and all other very tender plants should be taken in before the nights become frosty. These plants, together with geraniums, monthly roses and most other tender plants, can be kept dormant over Winter when potted and stored in the cellar, placing them where they receive some light and giving them an occasional watering to prevent the soil from drying out.