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Giving Seeds to Children

Among the many avenues of effort that are open to the horticultural societies, and that have been taken advantage of by many, is the distributing of seeds to school children. As the wisdom of this practice has been challenged occasionally, it is interesting to read the results of the work in St. Catharines, Ont. For the convention of the Ontario Horticultural Association held at Toronto in November, Mr. Jas. A. Wiley of St. Catharines prepared the following report:

"In 1906, for the first time, the St. Catharines Horticultural Society distributed seeds to the school children of the city to be grown by them, and, for the best bloom grown and exhibited, prizes were offered in the July and September exhibitions. Sweet peas and aster seed were chosen for distribution that year and since. The committee appointed to have charge of the distribution of the seeds secured the co-operation of the school teachers in placing the seeds in the hands of the school children. On a given day, each and every member of the school, who desired to try and grow the seed, were given a packet of sweet peas or asters as they chose and they promised to do their best. Culture directions were printed on the envelope containing the seed."

"While all the children who took the seeds did not succeed as was desired, yet the results in many cases were very gratifying. In July of that year 65 exhibits of sweet peas were made at the sweet pea exhibition, and in September 217 exhibits of asters were made. They reflected credit on the efforts of the children making them. The exhibits of sweet peas and asters for 1907 were equally gratifying and showed a marked improvement in the quality of bloom exhibited.

"The year 1908 was the best yet. The society not only distributed seeds to the city schools, but included Port Dalhousie, Merriton, Thorold, and Grantham and Louth Townships. Though this did not prove a good year for sweet peas, there were 63 exhibits at the exhibition in July and showed a quality equalling many of the exhibits entered by the adults.

"In the September exhibition there were 265 exhibits of asters by school children, the largest number of entries yet made, filling a space of over 260 square feet (and a little crowded at that). The asters showed such a marked improvement in quality and manner of displaying them that it was realized that the adults would have to look well to their laurels or they would lose them.

"The time is not far distant when the St. Catharines Horticultural Society will be receiving many members from the ranks of the school children, indeed some of them have become members already. Not only are to be noted the creditable exhibits and the membership that may result to the society through this work, but the vaster and more marked results are the improvements in the yards and gardens where school children are interested. Many an ugly weed patch has been turned into a spot of beauty, admired by all, and they have an influence on the child life. While at work and associated with the beautiful, cannot but make the child a better citizen. By all means interest them and educate the children in this work. It is worth the effort."

As a reader and contributor to various gardening periodicals of Great Britain, for the last twelve years, I find THE CANADIAN HORTICULTURIST a thoroughly practical paper, which no person should be without, if at all interested in matters horticultural.

—A. V. Main, Pinehurst, Almonte, Ont.

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