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Maytime—The Time for Flowers In-the-Making

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Maytime—The Time for Flowers

By RALPH R. ROTHACKER, Greenhouse Assistant

AREN'T they beautiful? And what home would be without them? It is beyond the facilities of many homemakers to have a flower garden, so any who are conveniently situated should put forth the effort to grow flowers in or near their homes.

What kinds of gardens shall you have, and how shall you have them? Gardens are not to be done in the traditional biennials, annuals and pseudo annuals. The perennial garden has much in store for May. Graceful Darwin tulips fill the brightest part of the border. The daffodils bloom cheerfully at the base of the half leaved, greyish green shrubbery. The iris join in the theme and swell the May song with a fullness and richness that holds us in rapture bound. The peonies add greatly to the wondrous show. Making up the lesser parts are the alkanets, the long spurred columnines, bleeding hearts, Sweet Williams, mountain pinks, garland flower, the white creas, tufted pansies, English daisies, and the sweet scented Lilies of the Valley accompany the melody of the song. May has a flower composition all its own, and thus the perennial garden continues.

The perennials, supplemented with the annuals and biennials make up the complete flower garden, but since many of us are not able to have a perennial garden, we of course take the next in choice, and plant those flowers that come with annuals. These are the flowers that grow and bloom in the same season and need to be planted again each succeeding year. If one is a real enthusiast, he has already many kinds of seed started indoors, in shallow plots or pans, but for the many who have not known of this plan, the following brief directions may help greatly.

A general plan or scheme should first be made, or otherwise disappointments may result. A few "do's" and "don'ts" before we start may save them and results.

Don't place these flower beds in the middle of a pretty lawn; it is better to confine them to the border of the yard or around the house, and if sufficient space permits, plant an annual garden in the side or back yard. It is the best taste to keep the area back of the house as good or better looking than the front lawn.

How shall you have your garden?

Prepare the ground much as for vegetables, mulsifying the ground deeply and finely. Sow the seed thinly as thick sowing will cause many failures. Plant solid blocks or rows of one color as a mixture usually results in a riotous confusion of color which is not restful or pleasing to the eye. If a mixture is desired, buy packets of the separate colors that you desire and then mix them yourself. Beds should not be too wide or it will be difficult to weed or pick thin. Thin the plants to stand the proper distance apart to allow room for growing.

Preferably all the annual flowers may be sown in May, although some of the more tender varieties should not be sown out of doors until all danger of frost is past. Among these tender kinds are: amaranthus, browallia, celosia or cockscomb, cornflower, California poppy, butterfly flower, castor oil bean, and gourds.

When covering any seeds, do not cover them too deeply, since three times their own depth is sufficient. Very fine seed, such as petunia, verbena, dianthus, tobacco or nicotiana, salpiglossis, portulaca, and snapdragon should be covered very lightly, or better still, they should be sown broadcast on the surface of the loosened soil, and then be firmly patted down. The soil should be firmly pressed over all seeds, as this brings a supply of moisture to the seed.

Where the soil dries quickly, it is a good plan to cover the seeded area with a strip of board, newspaper or canvas until the seeds break through the soil, at which time the coverings may be removed, care being taken that the seed has no chance to dry out. Many failures occur at this stage as a germinating seed is very weak and once it dries, the plant is killed.

There is yet another alternative for those who cannot grow flowers from seed, and that is to buy the plants from the florists and transplant them into the home beds. In this transplantation, it is best to make the change in the evening or on a cloudy day, as this permits the young plants to become partly established before the sun can wilt them down. Shuckle the plants with some covering, as newspapers, to break the rays of the sun for several days helps the plants to start growing without a severe check.

After the plants are started and spaced properly, some of them will tend to grow tall and leggy; but by pinching out the growing point, side branches will develop which make the plant compact and well shaped. It is best to do this pinch when the plant is three to six inches high as it may be done at any later period of growth.

Some of the plants most benefited by this pinching are: stock, petunia, snapdragon, cosmos, butterfly flower, baby's breath, salpiglossis, Swan River daisies, calliopse, and the annual chrysanthemums. It is well to remember to remove the seed pods on all flowers if possible. This practice extended to the blooming period, also increases the number and quality of the flowers.

The annual vines are not to be neglected in the planning of the spring garden, especially not the sweet pea, which May is too late to plant them since they should be planted early in March or April as possible if the best results are desired. The climbing nasturtium is perhaps next in favor with its dual use, for the vines can cover many unsightly places, and the bloom may be used for a table decoration. Morning glories get less appreciation than they deserve, for one must see them with the dew on them to appreciate the clear crystal colors of the corolla. Excellent varieties of the morning glory can be found in any market.

Cobaea scandens makes a tremendous amount of growth in a season and is used to cover porches. With these are the cypress vine, Japanese hop, scarlet runner bean, canary bird vine, and gourds, each one having a feature of its own.

If there is yet some space unfilled, a few of the everlasting or single flowers are always interesting. The principal annuals are helichrysum bracteatum, helioperum rossum, helioperum mangle (Swan River daisy), helioperum humboldtianum, gomphrena globosa, (globe amaranth), xeranthemum annum, (immortelle) and catarhaca eae, rules. Pick the flowers at their prettiest stage, remove the leaves and hang the blooms upside down in a dark, dry place. The dried flowers are used for winter decoration, which have been quite popular this season.

Color combination plays a great part in the appreciation of a garden, since the wrong combinations can utterly ruin the beauty of some of its participants. Some of the following groupings produce the best effects:

1. A bed of blue bachelor buttons can be nicely edged with sweet Alyssum or candytuft, both of the latter being of the dwarfed, white type. The bachelor buttons will furnish a constant supply of cut flowers.

2. Another excellent cut flower is the snapdragon, which looks well bordered with dusty miller.

3. Verbenas planted twelve inches apart make a very effective border.

4. Into your bed of pansies may be transplanted a few of the dainty blue Trowallia demissa, which will cast a very light and airy effect over the whole bed. For the sweet pea bog, not neglect planting baby's breath (gypsophila elegans). This will look well grown in a bed with annual larkspurs or with stocks. Baby's breath must be planted several times during the season in order to have a continuous supply.

5. Some persons admire small hedges of summer cypress or kokia, but this plant turns a very disagreeable bluish crimson color in the autumn which will harmonize with nothing else.

6. No annual flower blooms as long as the petunia, and their color spectrum can be chosen before setting in the bed, the results will be better than if they are mixed. It is unnecessary to combine these with any other flower and they

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The conference also decided that next year 100 points for being on the main teams, 25 for the squads, and 15 for the second team of any sport would be given toward athletic honors. Finances were discussed and methods employed by the different schools. It was also decided (Continued on page 16)

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