

Old-Fashioned Garden Planting

BY HENRY WILD IN "AMERICAN HOMES AND GARDENS."

The following is the first of two articles on the perennial, or old-fashioned, garden, reprinted by courtesy of "American Homes and Gardens."

THERE are few homes, however unpretentious, that have not some part of the grounds available for garden purposes. There may be only a strip of soil in front of a border of shrubbery planted for a screen, but this will make an ideal bit of perennial or old-fashioned garden.

The charm of the old-fashioned garden lies, as a rule, in its simplicity of design and surroundings. Many of us remember the clumps of lilac and mock orange that formed the setting for the gardens of our early homes, also the clumps of cedars or of hemlocks around which grew the tiger lilies and iris. Afterwards came the phlox, the Michaelmas daisies and chrysanthemums.

Each had its natural background to emphasize its natural effect. That is why the impression of such gardens rests always with one. The bed of lily-of-the-valley that came year after year, spreading until it came up through the foliage of its companions and forming in its natural way an undercover for the lilies, columbines, larkspur, etc., that were to follow, is indeed a sweet garden memory.

If you have decided to make an old-fashioned garden, make a good start by preparing the ground thoroughly, working into it well-rotted manure and partly decayed leaves or other vegetable matter. A garden border well made is more than half the secret of success, and in later years when the plants come to be separated, one will have very little trouble in the matter of replanting in such soil.

When one reflects that peonies, for instance, will probably occupy the same spot for seven or more years, one will have an appreciation of the fact that deep digging is not only necessary but essential for the welfare of the plants. Should the subsoil be composed of hardpan or clay it would be advisable to drain it. While many perennials will stand a lot of water, they will not thrive with wet feet. This is the cause of a great many plants being lost every winter. It is not the low temperature altogether, it is unnatural conditions.

When border or garden has been well prepared and given a few days to settle rake in a good dressing of bone meal. October is the best month to do your planting. Most of the plants are forming new roots at this time and soon become established and will reward you with a good show of flowers the next season.

Now for the arrangement of plants in the border. It is not advisable to plant in squares or set lines. Aim to have an irregular outline rather, planting the taller-growing species in the background as a rule, still allowing some of them to break in between the lower-growing kind. For instance, a clump of peonies will be taller when in flower than many of the later flowering plants, while many of the phlox, bocconias, hollyhocks, and helianthus, etc., will tower above them later on.

I would advise the planting of phlox to run into peonies; hollyhocks into aquilegias; larkspur into coreopsis, etc. In this manner you will have a succession of bloom and a broken outline. Many desirable plants have been added to the lists of perennials and biennials of recent years, hardy and free-flowering. One of these, *Achusa Italica*, drop more variety, is a genus growing from four to five feet high with a mass of beautiful gentian blue flowers. This blooms a little in advance of the delphiniums, lengthening the season of blue flowers.

If hollyhocks are planted quite close to the *Achusa*s, they will take their place later in the season. Dahlias will also serve the same purpose. Another real acquisition to the garden are the giant mallow marvels, growing as high as the hollyhock in one season and producing in August and September a wealth of gorgeous flowers, ranging from white to dark red.

I have used these in lake and stream planting as well as the ordinary border, and they have been just as floriferous in one place as the other. With a background of hemlock or pines they are seen to better advantage and their superb flowers are greatly enhanced.

The addition of a few evergreens in the background of shrubs form the

ideal setting for a garden of this style. With a proper selection and arrangement there should be an interesting succession of flowers from mid-April until November, starting with the crocus and ending with the hardy chrysanthemum.

With an ever increasing love for the country home and grounds most families stay later each year at the farm and now it is nothing unusual to stay in rural surroundings till Thanksgiving. Where the gardener was formerly called upon to have a bedding display of geraniums, coleus, etc., for the Summer months only, he is now expected to give a continuous display for six months. This means the restoration of the old-fashioned garden, which suits the environment in most cases far better than the old style. As a means of utility, floral education and beauty the change is for the best, adding in its own peculiar way a love for Nature and simplicity. Some charming combinations can be made in the planting and color schemes by a judicious use of annuals and bulbs, the latter supplying the earliest flowers.

I would recommend planting the permanent varieties first, such as peonies, iris, delphiniums, phlox, boltonias, helianthus, heleniums, dictamnus, etc., and then filling in between them with such bulbs as narcissus, tulips and lilies. All these can be planted in the Fall and protected in practically the same manner with coarse stable litter or leaves.

Such plants as sweet William, Canterbury bells, fox gloves, etc., unless covered with light material like salt hay, straw or rushes, are apt to be killed or else be found with the crown rotted when uncovered in Spring. If they are planted in the Fall cover lightly. A safe rule to adopt for winter protection is as follows: Cover all plants that remain green through the winter with light material, those that die down to the ground with leaves or coarse material.

More plants are destroyed by excessive covering than by frost. We now come to the subject of a general list of plants. One of the first to flower in Spring is *Arabis Alpina*, "Rock Cross," followed by *Alyssum saxatile* with its bright yellow clusters of bloom. *Phlox subulata*, "Moss Pink," makes a fine planting for the front of the border, forming in time a carpet of pink or white. If some tulips are planted between the plants of the two-former they follow in close succession, making the garden bright in early May.

"Cottage Maid" tulip with the *Arabis* and red *Potterbakker* with the *Alyssum*. If preferred crocus or scillas can be used. The late flowering tulips, Darwins or May flowering, are best used amongst the late flowering plants. *Anthemis*, *Coreopsis*, *Hollyhocks*, *Delphiniums*, etc., with their young, soft foliage make an ideal setting for these.

Try tulip *gesneriana major* among your *Anthemis* or "Clara Butt" with the hollyhocks or delphiniums. Here is where this class of tulips are seen at their best, and at the same time, making the garden attractive before the wealth of bloom that comes in early Summer.

A nice collection of later-flowering tulips can be made from the follow-

ing: Glow, Gretchen, Picotee, Bouton'or, King Harold, Farncombe, Sanders, Clara Butt, Nora Ware, Le Candour, Rev. Eubank and the *gesnerianus*, red and yellow. These are inexpensive and have been improved on for several years. *Narcissus* planted among peonies makes a beautiful contrast, their bright yellow flowers showing to perfection against the red stems of the young foliage.

If late flowers are required in preference to early display try *Lilium speciosum* in variety among the peonies. Lilies thrive among peonies. The foliage of the latter gives shade to their roots, which makes favorable growing conditions. *Cerastium tomentosum* is a very pretty border plant; when placed near *Lilium perenne* the effect is beautiful. The aquilegias "Columbines" are graceful plants. They can be had in nearly every color. *Anthemis Kelway* and the glorious blue *Achusa* "Dropmore Variety" are both early Summer flowering.

Fox gloves are at home in the old-fashioned garden, their tall spikes showing to perfection near the background, their slender flowers swaying softly with every passing breeze, while the spikes are strong enough to stand without staking. The yellow variety, *digitalis grandiflora*, will flower most of the Summer and can remain in the border for several years. Blue violas make a pretty combination and natural effect under yellow foxgloves, especially if the position is in partial shade.

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