

Flowers About the Farm Home

MOST housewives take great pleasure in making the table look as attractive as possible to the eye, believing that its pleasing appearance adds to the pleasure afforded in the gratification of the appetite and that the aesthetic and the practical should be made to work together in everyday home life. That flowers on the table have a refining influence no one can doubt who has seen what they can do, and the liberal use of them should be encouraged to the fullest extent.

The woman who lives in the country will find it an easy matter to furnish her table with flowers from late Spring to early Fall, because she can grow them in her own garden, but the woman who lives in the city and has no garden facilities cannot do this. And many a woman who loves flowers and would like to keep her table bright with them cannot afford to purchase from the florist; for flowers, especially in Winter, are expensive luxuries.

But she can, in the majority of cases, grow a few plants in the window, some of which will furnish bloom and others foliage beautiful enough in itself to make up for lack of flowers. It will be found that a growing plant is quite as attractive as many flowers are, and it can be made the basis of a more brilliant and colorful decoration, if desired, by using a few cut flowers among its foliage.

A Good Window Plant.

One of the best plants for this purpose is asparagus (Plumosus manus). Because of its filmy, delicate foliage it is often called asparagus fern, but it has not the most distant relationship to the fern family. It is a cousin, several degrees removed, of the asparagus of the vegetable garden. It forms a compact mass of branches from a foot to a foot and a half in length, which spread gracefully over the pot in such a manner as to hide all of it that is not concealed by the jardiniere.

Young plants are best for table use. If three or four roses or half a dozen carnations are thrust down among the stalks of the plant you have a decoration that is far more satisfactory, nine times out of 10, than one of the florists' "designs" for which you would have to pay \$2 or \$3.

The woman who cannot afford to buy flowers two or three times a week for use on her table will find it one of the best paying investments she can make to purchase three or four of these plants and let them take their turn in doing duty on the table.

Jerusalem Cherry.

Another very satisfactory plant for this purpose is the one sold exclusively during the holiday season under the name of Jerusalem cherry. It has rich, dark green, glossy foliage, and bears a profusion of bright crimson fruit, quite as showy as flowers. If removed to the window when meal time is over it will give table service nearly all Winter. Ardisia crenulata is similar in habit and coloring and is equally as desirable.

Everybody admires a fern, especially the adiantum members of this most extensive family, but until quite recently none of the adiantums have given satisfaction when grown in the house. They were too delicate for the living-room. Now, however, we are given one which has proved excellently adapted to house culture because of the thick, firm texture of its foliage and its strong, robust constitution. This variety is sent out under the name of Croweanum. An illustration of it accompanies this article. A fine plant of it will make a decoration fit for the finest table in the land.

For Table Decoration.

I know of no flowering plant superior for table decoration to begonia (Gloire de Lorraine). This variety bears so many flowers that each plant gives one the impression of being a bouquet arranged by the florist who has the good taste to arrange flowers naturally. In color it is a soft, dainty pink. The peculiar charm of its coloring comes out most exquisitely under artificial light. Plants ready to bloom can be bought in Fall from most florists. Their flowers will be retained for weeks if the plants are not kept on the table all the time. Any growing plant should be returned to the window between meals if you would keep it in good health. If kept away from the light for long at a time it will not remain healthy.

There is a small variety of palm—

Cocos Weddelliana—which makes a charming appearance on the table. Its gracefully arching fronds are light and feathery, and lack entirely the coarseness which characterizes the larger-growing members of the palm family.

Money invested in a plant of this kind will prove a most satisfactory investment, the housewife will find, costing far less in the long run than cut flowers and really affording more pleasure, because they furnish a decoration of a rather uncommon character. I would advise buying a plant or two of each kind in order to secure variety. If this is done the woman of the home will always have material at hand with which to make her table attractive, and she will be in a measure independent of the florist.

Study Arrangement.

In decorating the table with flowers from the home garden we are quite likely to make the mistake of using too many, because the supply is so great that we do not feel obliged to economize. But a little experimenting will soon convince you that a few flowers tastefully put together will afford far more pleasure than many so crowded that their individuality is lost.

Arrange them as naturally as possible, taking Nature herself as your teacher. In other words, study, the flowers you make use of in the garden beds and strive to make your arrangements of them look natural and informal. The illustration of the poppy shows such an arrangement, and it also shows how small an amount of material is needed to produce an artistic effect.

A pot of cyclamen covered with flowers will be found a charming thing to use on the table for occasions where flowers seem indispensable and cut flowers are hard to get or cannot be afforded. So will freesias, as will daffodils or Roman hyacinths. They will be found far more satisfactory than a great mass of cut flowers inartistically arranged. Simplicity, you will readily see, should be the keynote of whatever decoration is used—simplicity and naturalness. What could be simpler than the vase of peonies? And could anything be more artistic than this natural arrangement of them? The more you look at it the more you will be convinced that its charm is in its naturalness and the entire absence of formality.—Eben E. Rexford in *The Farming Business*.

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