

My Bay-Window February Garden

UNTIL we had our February garden this month was to us the most cheerless of the year. There was no pleasure to be obtained walking abroad. The silence of Nature was oppressive and the cold penetrating. Our feathered friends had long since migrated to warmer climes, while many of the familiar wild things were enjoying their long sleep. We, therefore, determined to make our own sunshine within doors.

We had no conservatory, but an unusually large bay-window made an excellent substitute. Two broad shelves ran around the entire length of the window, accommodating about 40 medium-sized pots. Two windows were devoted to bulbous plants, and the center window to geraniums and different varieties of the coleus.

In November, we received a present of Holland bulbs of hyacinths, narcissi, daffodils and tulips. It was this gift which prompted us to try a February garden. We immediately planted these bulbs in shallow pans, eight or nine inches across, placing five or six bulbs in each pan. We secured a fine earth mold from the woods near at hand, finding by previous experience that this soil is excellent for most plants.

After the bulbs were planted we placed them in a cool, dark cellar for a month, in order that they might become well rooted before being brought to the light. This, let me add, is very essential to successful bulb culture. We once tried to raise hyacinths without observing this rule, and the result was a stunted growth and an immature spike of blossoms.

In this instance, we were especially successful with our hyacinths. Bulbs of different varieties were planted in the same pot and, when in bloom, the effect was more than satisfactory. Spikes of flowers in varying shades of purple, rose and yellow made a gorgeous display, even on a dark February morning. To our collection of Holland bulbs we added what were termed "Dutch Roman" hyacinths. These bulbs are specially adapted for house culture, as they do not grow so tall or so large as the Holland bulbs. Some people call these bulbs the "pan" variety. The smallness of the plant and the blossom is fully compensated by the fact that each bulb produces several spikes of fragrant blossoms.

I am not so fond of tulips as of other bulbous plants, and had only one pan. They added a brilliancy to our already gorgeous floral display. Our collection comprises two pots of white and two of yellow daffodils. The petals of pure white and the crown of yellow formed a pretty contrast; the flowers were so perfect that they resembled wax flowers. I was especially fond of my pan of yellow daffodils, for they seemed to scatter sunshine and good cheer, which even the dismal February clouds could not dispel.

To our collection of bulbous plants we added a few miscellaneous ones. Our Cuban lily was particularly beautiful. The blossom was white in color and not large. Indeed, this modest little plant would never have been noticed among its showy neighbors had it not been for its peculiar and exquisite fragrance, so different in quality from any other, which readily led to its discovery. A pan of freesias completed our list, if we except a tub containing an amaryllis which stood on the floor. The freesia is a free bloomer, although not a showy plant. We had both the white and the yellow varieties.

The center of our bay-window was devoted to geraniums and coleus plants. No plants are more satisfactory for winter blooming than geraniums, as they do not require more than ordinary care and are free bloomers. We prepared our slips late in August, bringing the plants into the house just before frost. Almost every color imaginable was repeated in our geranium blossoms—single and double. Our coleus plants were also satisfactory, being easy to slip, and growing rapidly when once rooted.

I attribute a large part of the success of our February garden to the fact that the room in which these plants were kept was not lighted by gas.

In the rear of this bay-window stood a wire plant-stand filled with ferns and palms. This made an effective background. We tried in vain to obtain a picture of our window, but the result was so unsatisfactory that the attempt was discarded.

It takes considerable time and thought to produce a February gar-

den like the one we have just described, but the experiment paid in the pleasure it afforded not only ourselves, but others.—Harriet Woodward Clark, in *Suburban Life*.

Floral Brevities.

Keep water from rex begonia leaves in cold weather.

Pinch all dead blooms from Chinese primroses and cinerarias and more flowers will come.

The little red spider is the cause of many leaves drying up. Keep foliage moist and they will disappear.

Paper tubes six or eight inches in length and large enough to cover the hyacinth foliage will help to make the spikes taller and bloom larger.

Do not forget that if green aphids are difficult to get rid of in winter, your plants may be immersed in hot water with a temperature of 130 degrees; by holding the hand over the earth in the pot, and dipping foliage in water in a vessel large enough for the purpose, every living creature will be killed and the plant uninjured.

Do not fail to feed the azalea when the buds are forming and all through its blooming period. Soak some fresh manure in water, and give the liquid to the plant, once or twice a week, in moderate quantities. This will bring finer blossoms.

If the sand or earth in boxes or flats in which pots are placed in a sunny window is soaked now and then with hot water poured outside the pots, it will create a steam and a moisture that will bring new life to every plant in the place. Of course the box or flat should be so it will not leak.

If pots containing orange or lemon trees are set in basins containing warm water once or twice a week, and allowed to remain there for an hour, the fruit on the trees will develop much more rapidly, and when fully grown, will ripen more quickly than if the heat is not applied. This produces a sort of tropical condition.

Palms do much better in a very moist atmosphere, and if the room is quite dry, a wet cloth placed about the pot or tub will help to supply the moisture the plant requires. Place the pot in a basin of warm water once or twice a month during winter months, and this will act as a tonic to a palm.

Bath rooms are excellent for most plants. Hyacinths will bloom most luxuriantly there, and most foliage plants will thrive well in the bathroom on account of the extra amount of moisture. Geraniums do not bloom as well in winter in such a moist atmosphere, and cacti are much better in the warmest and driest atmosphere about the house.

Cellar Gardening.

Even the cellar can be turned into a growing room during the winter, when everything outdoors is frozen up. Rhubarb, asparagus and mushrooms can be grown in the ordinary cellar. Success is most sure with rhubarb. Dig the roots now and store them in a cool, dark place, in damp sand or in soil, where they can rest. To force them, plant them in a box or half-barrel and place them near the furnace. The heat will soon force the roots into growth, and it will be a matter of only a few weeks before the stalks are ready to cut or pull. Rich soil is not a necessity; the food is already stored in the roots.

The same plan is followed for asparagus. Mushroom growing involves more work, and few people really like the idea of having manure in the cellar, although there is no odor from it except on the day when it is put in the cellar. Horse manure should be used and should be prepared outdoors, and, when ready, put in the cellar. As soon as the bed is at the proper temperature, it is spawned, and the bed cased in. In a few weeks mushrooms will appear if the venture is to be a success. It is an uncertain crop for the amateur, and even professional gardeners sometimes fail.

Don't Buy Cheap Plants.

If one is forced by circumstances to keep garden expenses down to a mere nothing he should sow seeds, rather than purchase plants. But get good seeds only; seeds high in price, but productive of the best of plants and flowers. It is far more satisfactory to pursue this course than to buy inferior plants. You may then, through the medium of good seeds, have your garden filled with the best of their several kinds that the markets afford. Surely this is worth while.

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