

Window Gardening

Charlotte Mabel Cottar,

1896.

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Flowers are one of nature's sweetest gifts to mankind.

"Bright gems of Earth in which perchance we see
What Eden was — what Paradise may be."

Without them life would not seem so bright to us, and to the true lover of nature they are as costly gems. They are found everywhere; away out on the broad prairies where there is no one to admire them; up on top of the mountains where no one can reach them, and down in the valleys where all may have them if they wish.

There are flowers found in every part of the earth; from the hot sultry climate of the torrid zone, to the cold and wintry regions of the northern zone; they are found in the rich man's stately mansion and in the poor man's humble dwelling. And they impart their fragrant odors to all alike.

Truly are they, "Nature's Jewels."

It is only within recent years that the subject of Window Gardening has found favor in the eyes of the people. But it is a form of flower culture, at once so simple and inexpensive, that it has now found favor with the many, and rich and poor alike.

may have some kind of a flower garden right in their homes at all times of the year. With so little cost and outlay of labor it seems that no one can afford to be without these beautiful gifts of nature.

The devices for Window Gardening are almost too numerous to mention. There are Window Boxes, Hanging Baskets, Bulb Glasses, Plant Cabinets, Ferneries and Flower Stands; Mantel Pieces, Wardian Cases, Window Necesses, Balconies and spaces between windows are boxed up and converted into beautiful miniature Edens. Anything from a tin can down to a sea shell may be used to grow some kind of a flower in.

Tables on which are fitted glass cases with glass tops make very good substitutes for window gardens for those who cannot afford anything more expensive. The case can be made of any wood which you happen to have, since it must be lined with zinc or copper to keep the moisture from rotting the wood. The height should be about four feet, the length three feet and a half, width two feet. The glass top has a grooved lower edge which fits down

tightly over the upper edge of the case. It can be lifted off any time and with these cases once a week is all that is necessary. Many people have bow-windows on the south side of their houses. If one is so fortunate they can have all the flowers one wishes. All the devices for growing plants are made in much the same way, only some are more elaborate than others. The main object is to keep the atmosphere moist and the temperature even.

As to the location of window gardens, the very best is a southeastern exposure where the plants will get the rays of sunlight from early morning till late in the afternoon. The next best is an east one, the next west, and lastly north. This last is by no means to be discarded, for there are many of our most beautiful plants that thrive best on the north side of the house where there is plenty of moisture and shade. For instance, the many varieties of graceful ferns which are the delight of many a flower lover; then there are the Camellias, Primulas, Alpine Auriculas, and those wonderfully pretty little flowers - pansies. Comparative-

ly few plants however, will do well where there is no sunlight. It is essential to most all plants. For lack of it they will grow lank and spindling, losing their vivid green color - the chlorophyll - which is a direct product of the sun's rays. This is verified if one will go into their cellar in the spring and notice the long bleached sprouts starting from the potatoes or turnips.

In the general management of plants in window gardens, the first requisite is that the manager be a genuine lover of plants. Or else there are sure to be failures. And it sometimes happens that the amateur takes too much care and works and fusses over the plants till the poor things wither and die. Oftentimes plants are watered to death, literally drowned, or the opposite extreme occurs and they die for lack of water. Some are kept too cool, some are kept too warm. It is he who is successful, who studies the nature of his plants in such a way that he knows just what is good for them.

One of the essentials in flower culture is healthy young plants. Plants that have

spent all their vitality in producing blossom during the summer months will not do well for fall or winter blooming. They, like everything else must have a period of rest.

Plants that were slipped and rooted during the months of June, July, and August will be the best. That will give them ample time to have made a good growth of young succulent roots, and having gotten their growth are ready to blossom when fall comes. These and these only should be used. Never use old plants if you wish to secure fine large flowers.

As to soil, that in which the plant is found native is the best, but as this cannot always be obtained a good substitute can be had by making a compost with turf mould as a basis. This compost heap of turf, leaves and manure should be tossed over every five or six weeks during the summer. It is always a good idea to start one of these things a year in advance of the time it is to be used. A very good soil one in which the majority of plants will grow, consists of two parts common turf, one

part sand, and one part of well-rotted manure or leaf-mould. This last is preferable to the manure. Garden loam, forest-mould and well rotted turf are handy and valuable material to keep on hand. It depends a great deal on the kind of plant as to soil. Many require rich heavy soil while others do best in the light porous kind. Soil for bulbs should be of this last. People living in cities can get their soil already prepared from the florist. Care should be taken that the pots be well drained, if they are not the soil will become soggy damp and mouldy, and this is sure death to plants. For drainage use broken bits of pots, pieces of charcoal and old plaster; place in the pots to the depth of one inch, leaving the bottom of the pot where the hole is, unobstructed, for the free passage of water.

In potting plants see that the soil is pressed firmly about the roots and stems; quite firm with hard wood plants and less firm with herbaceous. Half the success with plants lies in the potting. In

repotting plants, turn the pot upside down in your hand, give it a few raps on the side of the table, and if the plant is ready to repot, it will slip out of the old pot readily and still retain its shape. The roots should be white and succulent in a strong healthy plant. If there are any old or rotten roots trim them off with a sharp, clean cut knife, and reset the plant in a smaller size pot; if not then take a pot one size larger, put the plant that you have in your hand into the pot with enough soil in the bottom so there will be a margin of, say, one half inch at the top. Fill in with new soil and press down so firmly that you can take the plant up by the stem and it will not come out of the pot. If the plants you wish to repot are rather dry, water them before repotting, because if watered before, the water will run down through the new soil and leave the old still dry.

Many fertilizers are used in growing plants and a stimulant of some sort is good for them. Horse or cow manure water makes

an excellent promoter of growth; but one must be cautious in using it, not to get it too strong. Hen manure is another fertilizer which can be used with good result. These three can be obtained around the barn yard after a big rain, or a shovelful of the manure may be put in an old bucket containing charcoal, covered with water and let stand two or three days. It will then be ready for use. About one fourth ounce of ammonia to a gallon of water is a splendid stimulant. A number of others are used, but these four are easily obtained by most gardeners and are about the best two. Care should be exercised in the use of all stimulents not to get the decoction too strong. It should not be applied oftener than two weeks. After the plants have been potted and set in the shade a few days till they are well started, they should be brought into the sunlight. The window glasses should be kept scrupulously clean so as to admit all the sunshine possible. It is a good plan to put all the plants in a table or stand having rollers, so that they can be turned

around once or twice a week to prevent a one-sided growth which will take place if they are not turned. On real hot days they should be set away from the windows a little to prevent being cooked. But in winter the nearer you can place them to the window the better.

Attention should be paid to the temperature of the room where plants are grown. The greatest success is with a uniform temperature of from forty-five to fifty degrees at night, while from sixty to seventy degrees in the daytime. But different plants require different temperatures, some can stand a great amount of heat while others admit of but little. Temperature ^{and} moisture constitute two of the most important conditions of plants.

Plants like people need plenty of fresh air. Once a day at least fresh air should be admitted. In winter it is best to let air in through a window in another room or far enough away from the plants so it will not strike them directly. In summer it does not hurt if a window is opened right over the plants. The

atmosphere must neither be too cold nor yet too hot. Extremes will soon kill plants. If the air in a room is kept too close ^{and} warm the plants will take on a yellow spindling growth, and will not put forth any strong healthy buds. They must have plenty of fresh air.

Cleanliness of plants is as essential as the watering or the temperature. No dust should be allowed to remain long on the leaves, it interferes with their respiration. Plants breathe by means of air holes on their leaves and if these are clogged with dust respiration is hindered and they soon die. A wet sponge or toy syringe is a handy article to have for washing leaves of plants. A shower bath is enjoyed by nearly all plants. There are a few such as begonias, gloxinias and others with very succulent leaves, that cannot have water on them. It soon rots the leaves. In case a warm shower comes up, it is a good plan to set the plants out of doors and let them have a good shower bath. They will freshen up and look ten per cent. better.

The watering of plants is perhaps a little difficult for some. Just when to water them is a question asked by many. If the soil feels damp to the touch do not water them. Water should not be left standing in the saucers, it will keep the soil wet and soggy which is bad for any plant. If the water passes through the soil quickly they should be watered once a day at least. Plants that thrive best require the most water. As to the temperature of the water and kind, whether soft or hard. Soft water is always the best, and if this cannot be had, a little soda put into the hard water will soften it and will not injure the plants either. Cold water should never be put in plants. A temperature warm to the hand is a good general rule to follow. The amount of water varies with the kind of plant. Fuchsias and Calla lilies absorb a great amount of water during the growing period. The best time to water plants is in the early morning or after sunset. If the soil in pots is hard and lumpy stir up with a fork or stick before water-

ing or set the pot in a basin of water for half an hour.

The insects which infest plants are legion. Among them is the red spider which delights in a hot close atmosphere. It is very small, scarcely visible to the naked eye, yet works havoc among roses and carnations. A change of atmosphere is the best remedy, although tobacco smoke, red pepper, and quassia water are said to be good.

The green fly or aphid is another destructive pest and is removed by smoking, and deluging the plants with water. The mealy bug, a soft white furry looking object found mostly in foliage plants is killed by the use of whale-oil soap suds. Other plant pests are Thrips, white mites, angle worms, white worms and the ver-bena mite. All these are detrimental to plant growth, but if the plants are healthy growing well and have good care, insects will not hurt them much.

The culture of plants during the four seasons does not differ greatly. In the spring most of them will need repotting.

Rough unglazed pots should be used - and these thoroughly washed before repotting. Give the plants plenty of fresh air and water for this is the time when they will need it most. During the summer months more water is needed owing to the extreme heat from the sun's rays and still more air. The soil should be kept thoroughly stirred up so as to keep it well aired and fresh. All dead and withered leaves should be cut off, as also stems and flowers. Never throw this refuse down into the soil, it is not good for plants.

In autumn, plants should be taken up and carefully repotted. They need much the same care as usual with the addition of stimulents of some sort. In winter, they should be as near the window as possible and at night moved away to prevent frost bite. If they should happen to be frozen or frosted sprinkle with cold water and set away in the cellar for two or three days, and they will come out fresh and bright. In winter special care must be taken in regulating the atmosphere of the room. It is often the case that plants

are kept too hot and dry. This is sure death to them. Fresh air should be admitted at least once a day. If plants are well cared for they will produce abundant leaves and flowers for all who like them well enough to go to a little expense ^{and} labor to procure them. They bring many a bright thought and happy inspiration into the darkened sick room. Their cheering presence pervades the whole room and gives new hope and life to the weary one. The wards of the great hospital can testify only too truly to the great influence of flowers. "They are a spring of sunshine, a constant pleasure. We would have flowers in every home, for their sunny light, for their cheerful teachings, for their unsensibly ennobling influence."

"In all places, then, and in all seasons,
Flowers expand their light and sun-like wings,
Teaching us, by most persuasive reasons,
How akin they are to human things."

And with childlike credulous affection
We behold their tender buds expand;
Emblems of our own great resurrection

Emblems of the bright and better land."

Kennyon.

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