

Thesis.

Landscaper Gardening as an Art.

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Our first, most endearing, and most sacred associations, are connected with gardens, our most simple and most refined perceptions of beauty are combined with them. Landscape Gardening, which is an artistical combination of the beautiful in nature and art, is capable of affording us the highest and most intellectual enjoyment to be found in any cares or pleasures belonging to the soil.

In Landscape Gardening, we seek to embody our ideal of a rural home by collecting and combining beautiful forms in trees, surfaces of ground, buildings, and walks, in the surrounding landscape.

In the orchard we hope to gratify the palate; in the flower garden, the eye and the smell; but in the landscape garden we appeal to that sense of the Beautiful and the Perfect, which is one of the highest attributes of our nature.

Europe has a number of examples of the modern style of landscape gardening, which is there called the English, or natural style. Many of the gardens are more striking from their numerous sculptural ornaments,

interspersed with fountains, than from the beauty or variety of their vegetation, or from their arrangement.

In the United States, it is highly improbable that we shall ever witness such splendid examples of landscape gardening as those abroad. The introduction of tasteful gardening in this country is, of course, of a very recent date. From twenty-five to fifty years ago, there were several country residences, highly remarkable for extent, elegance of arrangement and the highest order and keeping.

There is no part of the Union where the taste in Landscape Gardening is so far advanced, as on the middle portion of the Hudson. The natural scenery is of the finest character, and places but a mile or two apart often possess from the constantly varying forms of the water, shores and distant hills, widely different kinds of home landscape and distant view.

The beauties elicited by the ancient style of gardening were those of regularity, symmetry, and the display of labored art. They involved but little theory, and the

geometrical form and lines of the buildings were only extended and carried out in the gardens. In the best classical models, the art of the sculptor confined dignity and elegance on the garden, by the fine form of marble, vases, and statues.

During the time of Xu. IV. to level ground naturally uneven, or to make an avenue by planting rows of trees on each side of a broad walk, required only the simplest perception of the beauty of mathematical forms; to lay out a garden in the geometric style became little more than a formal routine, and it was only after the superior interest of a more natural manner was enforced by men of genius, that beauty of expression was recognized and Landscape Gardening was raised to the rank of a fine art. Where a taste for imitating an old and quaint style of residence exists, the symmetrical and knotted garden would be a proper accompaniment.

The earliest professors of modern Landscape Gardening have generally agreed upon two variations, of which the art is capable; variations no less certainly distinct, on the one hand, than they are capable of

intermingling and combining on the other.

Early writers on modern style were content with trees allowed to grow in their natural forms, and with an easy assemblage of sylvan scenery in the pleasure grounds, which resembled the usual woodland features of nature.

By Landscape Gardening we understand not only an imitation in the grounds of a country residence, of the agreeable forms of nature, but also an expressive, harmonious, and refined imitation. The two most forcible and complete expressions to be found in that kind of natural scenery which may be reproduced in Landscape Gardening are the Beautiful and the Picturesque. Grandeur and Sublimity are also expressions strongly marked in many of the noblest portions of natural landscape. But except in rare instances, they are beyond the powers of the Landscape Gardener, at least in the comparatively limited scale of his operations in this country.

But there are some things that may give a distinct character to a small country residence. These are simplicity, dignity, grace, elegance, and gaiety. A few fine trees

scattered and grouped over any surface of smooth lawn, will give a character of simple beauty. He who would create in his pleasure grounds these more delicate shades of expression, must become a profound student, both of nature and of art.

The Beautiful in Landscape Gardening is produced by outlines whose curves are flowing and gradual, surfaces of softness, and growth of richness and luxuriance. In the shape of the ground, it is evinced by easy undulations melting gradually into each other. In the form of trees, by smooth stems, full, round, or symmetrical heads, of foliage and luxuriant branches often drooping to the ground, which is chiefly attained by planting and grouping, to allow free development of form, and by selecting trees of suitable character, as the elm, the ash, etc. In walks and roads, by easy flowing curves, following natural shapes of the surface, with no sharp angles or abrupt turns. In water, by the smooth lake with curved margins, embellished with flowing outlines of trees, and full masses of flowering shrubs, or in the easy winding curves of a

brook.

Among all the materials at our disposal for the embellishment of country residences, none are at once so highly ornamental, so indispensable, and so easily managed, as trees or wood. We have them in the foreground, as well as in the distance, on the tops of hills, and in the depths of valleys.

The different seasons of the year too, are inseparably connected in our minds with the effects produced by them on wood and scenery. Spring is joyous and enlivening to us, as nature then puts on her fresh livery of green, and the trees bud and blossom with a renewed beauty, that speaks with a mute and gentle eloquence to the heart. In summer, they offer us a grateful shelter under their leafy branches, and whisper unwritten music to the passing breeze. In autumn, we feel a melancholy thoughtfulness as, "We stand among the fallen leaves," and gaze upon their dying glories. And in winter, we see in them the silent rest of nature, and behold in their leafless spray and seemingly dead limbs, an annual type of that deeper

mystery, the deathless sleep of all being.

Plants and trees every year unfold new and characteristic marks of ultimate beauty, which not only compensate for past cares and troubles, but like the returns of gratitude raise a most delightful train of sensations in the mind; so innocent and rational, that they may justly rank with the most exquisite of human enjoyments:

"Happy is he, who in a country life
Shuns more perplexing toil and jarring strife;
Who lives upon the native soil he loves,
And sits beneath his old ancestral groves".

As to deciduous, ornamental trees, we consider the oak the most varied in expression, the most beautiful, grand, majestic, and picturesque of all deciduous trees.

The elm is graceful, and is used for walks and avenues. In the autumn, the foliage assumes a deep yellow tint, making a contrast with surrounding colours. The poplar tree grows to a great height, and among the varieties is the Lombardy poplar, which, as Procter says; "Shoots up its spires, and shakes its leaves in the sun".

Among the evergreen ornamental

trees, are the pines, fir, cedar, arbor vitae, holly, and yew tree. Vines and climbing plants are objects full of interest for the Landscape Gardener, and nothing can so easily give a spirited or graceful air to a fine or even an ordinary scene, as the various plants which compose this group of the vegetable kingdom. Some of the climbers are the clematis, honey-suckle, wisteria, woodbine, and bitter-sweet.

Regarding the grounds, the private road leading from the public highway directly to the house itself should bear a proportionate breadth and size. At present, the house is generally so approached, that the eye shall first meet it in an angular direction, displaying, not only the beauty of the architectural facades, but also one of the end elevations, thus giving a more complete idea of the size, character, or elegance of the building; and instead of leading in a direct line from the gate to the house, it curves in easy lines through certain portions of the park or lawns, until it reaches that object.

There are two guiding principles which have been laid down for the formation

of approach roads. The first, that the curves should never be so great, or lead over surfaces so unequal, as to make it disagreeable to drive upon them, and the second, that the road should never curve without some reason, either real or apparent.

The drive is a variety of road rarely seen among us, yet which may be made a very agreeable feature in some of our country residences, at a small expense. It is intended for exercise more secluded than that upon the public road, and to show the interesting portions of the place from the carriage.

Walks, are laid out for purposes similar to drives, but are much more common and may be introduced into every scene, however limited. Some may be open to the south, sheltered with evergreens, and made dry and hard for a warm promenade in winter; others formed of a closely mown turf, and thickly shaded by a leafy canopy of verdure, for a cool retreat in the midst of summer. Others again may lead to some sequestered spot, and terminate in a secluded rustic seat, or conduct to some shaded dell or rugged eminence, where an extensive prospect can be enjoyed.

The walk should always correspond to the scene it traverses, being rough when the latter is wild and picturesque, sometimes scarcely differing from a common foot-path, and more polished as the surrounding objects show evidences of culture and high keeping.

Lakes or ponds are the most beautiful forms in which water can be displayed in the grounds of a country residence. They produce their most pleasing effects when they are below the level of the house. The most appropriate place to form a lake is in the bottom of a small valley, rather broad in proportion to its length. The distribution of islands in a lake or pond requires some judgement. Cascades and water-falls are the most charming features of natural brooks and riviulets. Whatever may be their size, they are always greatly admired, and in no way is the peculiar stillness of the air belonging to the country more pleasantly broken, than by the melody of falling water.

The English, above all other people are celebrated for their skill in what we consider rural adaptation. Their residences seem to be a part of the scenes where they are situated.

A porch strengthens or conveys expression of purpose, because, instead of leaving the entrance door bare, as in manufactories and buildings of an inferior description, it serves both as a note of preparation, and an effectual shelter and protection to the entrance.

The terrace may be ornamented with vases or urns, but a vase should never, in the open air, be set down upon the ground or grass, without being placed on a pedestal, as this gives it a character of art, at once more dignified and expressive of stability.

Two methods of forming flower beds are observed. One is, to cut the beds out of the green turf, which is ever afterwards kept well mown, or cut for the walks; the other to surround the beds with edgings of verdure. The irregular flower garden is surrounded by an irregular belt of trees, and ornamental shrubs of the choicest species, and the beds are varied in outline, as well as irregularly disposed, sometimes grouped together, sometimes singly, but exhibiting no uniformity of arrangement.

Lattice arbors, however, neatly formed of rough poles and posts, are much more picturesque and suitable for wilder portions of the scenery.

Fountains are highly elegant garden decorations; rarely seen in the country. With regard to summer houses, rustic seats, and garden edifices of like character, they should if possible, in all cases be introduced where they are manifestly appropriate or in harmony with the scene, thus making the entire surroundings more beautiful.