

Theses.

Plans for Country Homes in the  
Semi-arid Region.

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# Plans for Country Homes in the Semi-arid Region.

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## Plans for Country Homes in the Semi-arid Region.

The impression made upon the stranger's mind as he travels through the semi-arid region is one of loneliness and isolation. Few, mean low and scrubby trees are scattered along the scanty streams, often only one tree being seen and these in thin patches far apart.

The winters are long and dreary, and the bitter force with which the winds sweep across the prairies can be realized only by experience. As the semi-arid regions are being more thickly populated year by year it is therefore necessary that these dreary places be beautified if they are to become the permanent homes of thrifty people.

Before any thing else is attempted, there should be a definite plan decided upon. This had best be drawn and described on paper. In the making of this plan the size of the area, the exposure and the style of treatment are to be considered. A country home

should, because of the extensive area of the place, be treated in a natural style in order to maintain unity and harmony with the surrounding. The grouping of the trees and shrubs becomes an important factor in the construction of the more extensive areas.

The location of the building is the first question to be decided upon. The public road should not be too near as a lack of space is suggested when the highway is near. An elevated position for the house is greatly to be preferred because in the rainy season, if there is one occasionally, the water will flow in every direction from the house. A southern, south western or western slope gives the best protection from the north winds. Whatever the exposure the aim is to secure the best shelter from the prevailing winds, to obtain as much sunlight as possible and preserve the most beautiful views.

The architecture of the house should be in keeping with the surroundings and within the means

of the builder. A simple, plain, well-built structure with surroundings neat and kept up in a finished manner is more home like, has more attractiveness than the large showy house without tasteful decoration and outside care.

When the house and preliminary gradings are completed, then comes the smoothing up and preparation of the soil for the lawn. A rich, green turf is the one feature necessary in every pleasant home. It should extend up to and around the house.

The location of the walks and drives should be where they will be the most convenient and as nearly as possible give the shortest distance between the points to be reached and yet, unless the distance is very short, the straight line should be avoided because it gives the effect of stiffness and also the most favorable view of the house can not be obtained by a straight entrance. The point and determination of the walk or drive

must be decided upon, and the features that will be prominent along the course. The most pleasing features should be seen, and clumps of shrubs or vines are so placed that the course seems justifiable.

The chief difficulty in the semi-arid region is a lack of an abundance of water. Since there is a very small amount of rainfall in this region, the supply of water has to be from some other source. Wells are a source of water for the irrigation of home grounds. The water may be brought to the surface by means of a wind mill or engine, stored in a wooden or cement storage tank, and brought in suitable pipes to the house and grounds. One home in this region is supplied with water from one well, about four acres are irrigated, and the barns and currals supplied also. In this way fresh water is always to be obtained as the storage tank is constantly being refilled.

Trees are the first thing to be considered and first to be planted after the location of the buildings, as no comfortable or beautiful home can be made without them. Before any planting is done a plan of arrangement and what trees used and how many must be decided upon.

The arrangement of trees on the home grounds are for several purposes, for shelter during summer months and winter winds, for screens to shut out objectionable views, in groups alone or combined with shrubs for ornamental effect or to serve as a back ground for or setting to the house, thus furnishing or completing the house picture.

During the summer months some shade about the house is necessary and during the cold and stormy winters much shelter is afforded by them. Trees used for this purpose should be very hardy and provided with an abundance of thick tough

foliage. Evergreens are generally planted for shelter because of the foliage though a more pleasing effect is produced by the planting of some deciduous trees with the evergreens. Useful and ornamental trees may be combined to cut off objectionable views or give privacy to the home but the outside view should not be cut off. Where neither shelter or screens are needed trees are planted to decorate the grounds and also to set off the buildings.

Shrubs are especially adapted to add finishing touches and cause a blending of trees and the lawn or for massing in ornamental groups. Their foliage has greater variety in form, color of blossoms, and coming from the earliest spring to the late summer or early fall, they afford material for ~~more~~ beautiful effect than the trees. There are two general methods of grouping shrubs. First the grouping of many flowering varieties in one mass, thereby some

kind is in blossom at all times and Second, the arrangement of large masses of one specie to produce a marked effect.

Shrubs, grouped at a turn in a walk or drive or at their forking, makes one less conscious of the change in direction. Shrubs also serve to give a reason for an abrupt change in the direction of a walk. In pruning shrubs care should be taken not to destroy the blossoms, the regularity of the pruning will depend upon the kind of shrub.

Of all the plants that grow, the hardy herbaceous perennials as a class, are the easiest to manage as once planted they require very little care and are the cheapest and most naturalistic in the effect they give. They may be used in almost any situation where plants are wanted at all. Annuals grouped with the perennials give a very pleasing effect. In grouping annuals it is a very common error to plant them

in flower beds. They ought to be put not into beds but into the borders with the perennials and the shrubs.

In the accompanying plan of the grounds, these general remarks have been followed.

The house, having a southern exposure, is one hundred and fifty feet from the public road, this being far enough not to suggest a lack of space. The other buildings are north and east of the house.

The drive comes from the road directly to the house, no curves being justifiable in this case. The view is broken by the turn in the drive and this allows carriages to return to the main highway without going outside to turn. The drive way to the barns is hidden from the entrance by this turn and the evergreens of cedar and Scotch pine [C] make the curve of the road justifiable. The broken lines indicate grass walks to the kitchen garden; no other walks are necessary in the

country home plan.

Blue grass and clover has been sown on the entire grounds. In this region if the water is sufficient, the lawns are one of the most pleasing sights, the sod being thick and compact.

The trees used in the plan are planted in an irregular outline, not occupying more ground nor requiring additional care, yet the beauty is greatly increased and a natural effect is gained. The belt of trees [A] are slow growing species, oaks and walnut, together with the more rapid growing, as cotton wood, Honey locust and ash. This method is used in the plan as the slow growing species endure shade well and when the rapid growers have begun to decline they may be removed and the slow growing ones left. Group [B] is a planting of white and shingle oaks with boxelder.

In group [C] catalpas and hackberry are planted. The catalpa

blossoms freely and may be used for other purposes when no longer desired on the lawn. Ash is used in the planting [E]; shrubs of dogwood and the native chokecherry are used in the fore ground and give a very pleasing effect. The evergreens [F] of cedar and Austrian pine serve as a screen for the kitchen garden and their dark foliage is ornamental and restful.

The two trees [A'] are pin oaks, the oak being a favorite with all tree lovers. The leaves are retained through out the the winter, with some this is an objection to this variety. The tree in the front [D'] is an elm, a species which ought to be in every planting because of the abundance of shade, yet allows the circulation of the air freely under the branches. The three specimen trees [F'] are Colorado Blue spruce which makes a beautiful lawn tree, the foliage of the same variety often varying from dark green to bluish-green color. The soft

maples [F] give shade and protection to the house and add to the appearance of the grounds. At the rear of the house are two Douglas Spruce [C]. This tree had dark green foliage and the branches have a drooping effect which makes a very pretty tree for a lawn.

The shrubs at the entrance [X] are Elder, Dogwood and the native currant. The shrubs at the entrance give privacy to the home grounds, yet are inviting to those who enter. Different species of shrubs are at the rear; of the Japan quince (*Pyrus japonica*), Golden Bell (*Forsythia suspensa*) and Red-bud are species for the early blooming. The roses for later blooming are not to be dispensed with, the common prairie rose having quite pretty foliage and has a profusion of flowers when cared for. The snow ball [B], protected as it is by the other shrubs and trees, will give an abundance of blossoms.

The border beds L&T have the perennials, the annuals are in the front of the beds. The annuals that require more care and cultivation are put in the kitchen garden. The shrubs at the house are *Spiraea vanHouttei* L&T and climber *Virginia Creeper* L&T with *Spiraea japonica* as a low shrub. Climbing roses are used and give a beautiful appearance while blooming, the later foliage being a protection.

These grounds are not complete without the tennis court or croquet ground. The grassy spot indicated by L&T is a good location for this feature of the country home and it should not be omitted in the plans.

A fence detracts from the appearance of the home grounds but in this region is necessary if the grounds are to be kept up. A fence of strong wire fencing with a vine, Japan Honey suckle growing on it, is used. This is a hardy shrub

and retains the green appearance nearly all the year.

The home may be defined in many ways but the things it stands for are harmony, order, neatness and contentment. If the home grounds be kept in a finished manner the remainder of the farm is apt not to be neglected and the value of the home will be greatly increased.

