

Floriculture on the Farm.

Every one enjoys a ride through the country when the weather is pleasant and the roads are smooth and firm. You delight in the easy movement through green lanes with flowers blossoming by the wayside, birds singing in the hedges, through which you catch glimpses of meadows, pastures, and fields of grain; and above you the blue sky with fleecy white clouds sailing across it. And yet there is something monotonous in the drive. What is it? It is not Nature's work but man's work, - the lonely dreary farm house after farm house that you pass as you journey on. Some of the houses stand out boldly against the sky with nothing to relieve the sharp outlines. In other cases a forlorn half-hearted attempt has been made to improve the surroundings. Perhaps there is a lone broken tree in the fence corner, a few stalks of tiger lilies in a bed with stones set on end for a border, but between which the hens are now taking a dust bath. A straggling rose bush or two may be seen in the foreground, but weeds and tall rank grass are the prime rulers here, while pigs, pig-pens, and

stables also bear a prominent place in the foreground. You sigh for a change, and when the change does come you feast your eyes on the scene until a bend in the road hides it from your view. The house is no larger and no handsomer than the one you just passed, but what a difference in the appearance! Here the grounds are tastefully laid out, the lawn is smoothly mown, the trees, softly shading the vine covered house, are in scattered groups here and there. The flower beds and shrubs are neatly and naturally disposed. You can hear the hens and pigs but they are hidden from your sight by the shrubbery and the vine-covered fences.

Sad to say this beautiful country home is one of few. On the majority of Kansas farms Floriculture is sadly neglected. Wheat and corn are grown almost to the very doorway. Farmers think too little of beautifying their homes and too much of "raising more corn to feed more hogs to buy more land to raise more corn" and so on ad infinitum. If there is a house yard it is too often given over to sunflowers and weeds unless Nature takes pity on poor foolish mortal and drops a seed there which grows into a tree and kindly mellows the ugly bare outlines of the house. Often the poorest spot on the farm is selected on which to build

the home. Sometimes it is a rocky hillside where wheat and corn will not grow, or it may be a swampy hollow where only rank grass and malarial germs flourish.

It pays not only in dollars and cents but in the daily enjoyment and comfort one receives from it to build the house on the most fertile as well as the most beautiful part of the farm. And, having chosen the situation for the house, every farmer should, with the assistance of his family, become a landscape gardener. The planning, planting, and caring for the flowers is a source of endless interest and enjoyment to every member of the family. Some one has said: "It is the garden more than any other surroundings that gives comfort and happiness to the home". The farmer can well spare a few moments each day from his labors in the fields to mow the lawn, trim the trees and shrubs, and prepare the flower beds. His wife and children can then do the planting and watering, the trimming and training, and the beauty of the surroundings and the added interest they take in the spontaneous products of field and forest amply repays them for the time and care thus expended. One cannot work among the pure fresh flowers without becoming to some extent like them. They refine and educate,

they teach purity, patience, and perseverance. "He who plants trees and flowers preaches a culture that lifts men up towards the plane of the good and the beautiful." Parents need never fear for their children when the little hands are busied with flowers.

The lawn may include five acres or it may be only a hundred feet square. Indeed the lawn of less extent is to be recommended as it will probably always look better, with the limited time the farmer has to spend upon it, than the large lawn. Whatever the size it should be well kept for no matter how beautiful the flowers and shrubbery are if the lawn is unkempt or weedy the effect is destroyed.

What kinds of shrubs and flowers to plant is often a serious question with an amateur gardener. On the farm such should be planted as will give the greatest satisfaction with the least amount of work. Of shrubs of course the rose will be given first place. Other shrubs for the lawn are the familiar but beautiful lilac, several kinds of spiraea the best of which is Van Houttei, flowering almond, snow-ball, the bush and climbing honeysuckles, the trumpet creeper, and six or eight varieties of clematis, all thrifty. The list is a long one and I wish I might give the best species, the peculiarities, and mode of treatment of each one, but my time is

limited. The shrubby climbers are as beautiful and as satisfactory as any plant in the garden. They may be trained over the windows, the verandas, and over a trellis or they may be used to cover a bank, an old fence, and the out buildings.

The hardy perennials are another source of delight to the amateur gardener. They repay ten-fold the care lavished upon them. There is an endless variety from which to choose. Among these are many of the most beautiful things found in the old fashioned gardens such as our grandmothers delighted in. They are well worth a place anywhere in the garden but the best general way to arrange them is in an irregular border. This collects them in one place and gives them a semi-natural appearance. The arrangement should be as natural as possible but so there will be beauty all the season. Plants that bloom at the same time should be somewhat apart from each other. Or the flowers may be massed so that the color will show at some distance. In this way a weak point may often be brought out, a plant with an inconspicuous blossom when seen alone, will when thus massed appear very beautiful.

The list of annuals and biennials is also a long one. Among the annuals we have such fragrant

flowers as sweet alyssum, sweet peas, and mignonette which make a garden of delights for seven months in the year.

But we should not forget our native flowers. Undue preference is often given to foreign flowers against the neglect of many beautiful natives, unappreciated just because they are only "wild flowers". In cultivating these the environments should be as nearly like the conditions of their home as possible. But if the change is not too sudden it is wonderful under what varied circumstances and changed conditions these plants will exist and flourish.

With so many beautiful flowers all summer the farmer's wife will surely have a window garden, thus the family may keep spring and summer with them all the year round in the form of plants in the windows.

Of course all this will take time, skill, patience, and money but with the many helps offered nowadays in the way of Florists' papers and magazines, and numerous books on the subject, and with that wisest of all teachers - experience, the people on the farm will receive their expense, in all that makes life worth living. They will have a home worth living for, a home worth fighting for, a

home that is a "delight in childhood, a satisfaction in manhood, a refuge and solace in declining years"; a home that is constantly brought to mind, through association, by the sight elsewhere of a familiar flower, tree, or shrub; a home that clings to the memory after years of separation; a home that is a shrine of all that is dearest, the abode of all happiness, the treasure-house for whose dear sake all our thoughts are busy, all our labors undertaken.

May Secrest.