

BEAUTIFYING OUR KANSAS COUNTRY HOMES.

By

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Part 1.

The Philosophy and Practicability of Landscape Gardening.

A discourse on this subject may to some seem out of place and altogether base in its implications; and, it is with complaisance and a feeling of deferance that the writer labors under in the attempt to dabble in the philosophy of this problem. Yet a cursory glance over the field makes it apparent that there is ample ground for suggestion and criticism, and that more attention, more practical work and application in beautifying our country homes would result in an incalculable increase in benefits, both socially and financially. To-day, if one would stand and gaze with a critical eye, or travel and observe the dwelling places of our citizens, he would be forced to acknowledge that he sees not homes - scarcely the semblance of homes,- but in reality he sees a house, perhaps with a few dilapidated accompaniments.

The reason why our country homes should receive the attention of this article is this: In the country districts lie the redeeming qualities and the future welfare of our State. In our once broad and unhabited prairies is now the source of the life giving energy of progress. On this undulating plain of fertility and wealth are found the homes of our farmers, the active element and mainstay of our development, the bone and sinew, and the hope of further advancement. Under these conditions, why should we find so many dwelling places lacking the fundamental qualities of a home, places that are surrounded by unsightly objects, having their yards strewn with the wrecks of bygone machinery, the debris of the prehistoric

woodpile, and all imaginable refuse of a quarter or a half a Century of man's inhabitancy that all in all gives one but a feeling of weariness and disgust. It is an undisputed fact that outside of our cities we find but few homes that have been arranged with any idea of landscape art; but, on the contrary we find houses in various degrees of propriety and perfection, the lonely landmarks of man's inhabitancy, the dumb objects of the weathering and warring elements of nature, in fact objects symbolic of man's ethical and divine development. Whenever our farmers are awakened to their high calling, their responsibilities, and wonderful possibilities, or whenever their feeling of personal pride is aroused, than may we hope to see the work of man, in conjunction with that of nature, bloom into pictures of art, which will give to the toiling father, the patient mother, or the aspiring children a feeling of exhilaration, of love and kindness, and a feeling that nature, exhaustless in her stores, is ever ready to be the servant of man in all his progress and movements. A trained and willing mind, working in unison with nature, may so unite and harmonize all conflicting elements so that the infinite complexity of life may dwell as one complete and universal whole.

On the broad prairies of Kansas, we can find ample resources wherewith to beautify our homes. Among our rivers, creeks, and streams, on the prairie, hillside, or rocky knoll, or in the ravines, hollows, and swales may be found numberless trees, shrubs and flowers, which most of us, though lacking the skill of an artist could combine and arrange into the finest of landscape pictures. But it is a most fortunate fact that it is not necessary for us to confine our efforts to the native plant alone. The rainfall, the soil, and the climate of even so-called Arid Kansas will allow

and cause to grow such plants as the Cedar, Pine, Catalpa, Oak, Hawthorn, Red Bud, Locust, Spiraea, Rose, Honeysuckle, Barberry, Wahoo, Maple, and many others. The old theory and saying that we cannot grow this thing, or that thing is about exploded; for the advances made by cultivation, in the science of propagation, and in the science of plant breeding has made it possible to grow many plants in regions hitherto wholly unsuited to their growth. Crossing, Hybridizing, Dwarfing, and Acclimatizing are processes which have been instrumental to a great extent in bringing about this adaptability to so many diverse conditions.

The problem of landscape gardening contains two important factors:-first, a desire to see beautiful things, or make them beautiful; and second, the skill or power to put that desire into harmonious working order. The first factor is limited by an ignorance of what constitutes real beauty and our utter indifference or blindness to the things about us. Only when we have learned to see these things will we learn to love them. With this love will come the requisite desires. But few of us may possess the power of laying out in a garden or lawn all of those ideal imaginations and conceptions of the desired beauty. Altho the art of so doing is as old as civilization we find but few adepts. We may all possess more or less of a mechanical ingenuity, which is clearly manifest in our yards, most of which are simply nurseries of pet or striking shrubs and flowers set in a heterogenous way about the house. Such a collection of plants lacks harmony of composition, is not pleasing, except in its striking contrasts, and in all it has no one main idea or characteristic to which all others are subordinate. It lacks unity.

This evil, so common in our dooryards, may be easily remedied if the designer works to some one idea or conception and builds to it. By this method, a picture harmonious in composition is secured and, in that sense you have beautified the home. Many are the details needing careful consideration, and many are the modifying factors that must be looked into to secure and maintain the pictorial effect. Therefore, in laying out a lawn, first draw a plan of the grounds and buildings, giving specifications, and indicating by some character the place for each tree, shrub, or flower, and at the same time indicating the walks, drives, borders and groups. To do this, one must have a plan in mind, and have a good active imagination so as to know better how the real will appear. It is needless to say that such a planned lawn may need some changes in order to make it more nearly perfect. A plant may have to be taken from one group and placed in another group. As a rule shrubs either in groups or in borders are planted much closer together than is possible for them to grow when they reach maturity. In so planting the desired effect is sooner secured, and when the plants become too large they should be thinned out. So it is with the larger trees. In nearly every lawn we see examples of trees being too near the house or in a too crowded condition. The house becomes overshadowed and shut out from the world. The remedy for this is to grub or chop out the offending trees. A careful and thoughtful artist acquainted with the growth, habits, and periodic and seasonal changes of the different plants will avoid these difficulties by making the proper calculation for such changes.

The primary object in making this picture is to secure and retain naturalness. As to what this means, it is only necessary to observe nature, and you will see how her objects of beauty are

secured and arranged. In nature we will see the grass land dotted here and there with small clumps of trees or shrubs, or perhaps a solitary tree. On one or more sides this grassy plot is enclosed by a timbered belt or back ground. To avoid a too radical contrast between these two, they are merged by a low and devious belt of shrubs or trees called the fore ground. This foreground is the tie as it were to hold the picture together. Nearly all plants, by virtue of manner of seed dispersion, are scattered in nature. We find the oaks, ashes, elms, cottonwoods, and willows growing side by side. It is not the rule, but the exception, when we see those delightful groves of oak, walnut, or elm in nature. This irregularity of position and grouping in nature gives a pleasing combination of texture and foliage colors. A soft blending of the rough and delicate textures is secured. The different kinds of trees, from the different habits of growth give us a broken sky line, which is so essential in a picture to be devoid of monotony. By virtue, we may say, of the struggle for existence an irregular line of demarcation exists between the greensward and the foreground, thus leading to the formation of copses and vistas, the latter run into the woody background and form an abode of quietness and rest which draws on the aesthetic nature of man until he is lost in the wonderfulness of nature. The effects of stretches of green grass reaching into the quiet dark woodland is hard to describe. The work of nature is incomparable. In early spring time, the green grass springs up, followed soon by violets, dandelions and daisies. The elm buds open and bloom, the red bud comes out in pinky softness, the downy willow hangs out its cocoon-like catkins, the cottonwood sends forth its shower of fleecy whiteness, and all the trees put on their leaves and nature

once more is in its prime. But this is not all; for thru summer and fall the great kaleidoscope of nature is whirled past us--the fruits put on their scarlet hues, the oaks and maples their beautiful Autumnal colors, and the cottonwood the golden symbol of the coming winter. Thus nature, by her wonderful ingenuity of arrangement and transformation, is ever presenting to mankind some pleasing feature of her handiwork.

This description is intended to show what kind of an effect we should seek after in our lawn. In our yard we should first have an open grassy plot on which to work. The background, irregular in outline, should consist of our larger trees such as the sycamore, honeylocust, elms, box elders, and a few evergreen trees. (See list.) These trees should not be set in rows nor in groups of a kind, except in a large plantation where each individual general class such as nuts, the legumes, and the pines may be set by themselves. This is permissible because either of the classes contain quite a number of widely different plants. In the foreground set your smaller trees and the shrubs. In this foreground, grouping may be practiced with benefit. But do not make a collection of separate and individual groups, make them all continuous one with another as far as possible. Place these trees and shrubs so as to form the most pleasing combination or contrast with the background. Have the lowest shrubs in front, and do not fail to provide for the vistas and a flower border. In the open lawn a limited number of groups of spireaes, honeysuckles, barberries, mock oranges, wild currants, and false indigo (*Amorpha Fruticosa*) may be placed. Solitary shade trees, such as maple, elm, ash, oak, etc., may be placed in the lawn, but never in front so as to obscure the house or road. Flower beds though much overdone may

have a place in the lawn.

The question of drives and walks about the lawn is of no little import. Here again our people exhibit a mechanical and artificial ingenuity of having straight drives and walks leading directly to all objects and buildings. Walks and drives should be as few as possible, and constructed on the natural curve of beauty, not straight nor wandering aimlessly over the lawn like the path of a snake, but every path or road should be for a purpose, and its course as direct as possible within the bounds of beauty. It may be necessary, for convenience sake, to make straight roads, but this always incurs a sacrifice of beauty.

In making the groups, first spade up the soil and get it in a good condition. Set your plants in, preferably in the spring and probably thicker than is necessary when they will have attained their growth. Every group should have a purpose, and be so arranged as to give one or all of the special features of the individual plants constituting the group. Shrubs in grouping may be used in some considerable profusion, as they obscure but little of the view, require but little space, and the number which may be profitably used is very large. Our short grass farmers need not be discouraged because *Dentzias*, *Wygelias*, Pearl Bushes, and the finer sorts of *Spireas* fail to grow successfully; for they may with the native shrubs, the wild currant (*Ribes Arceum.*), the goose berry, sand plum, choke cherry, false indigo, dogwood, and yuccas form an agreeable combination and altogether pleasing effect in a country lawn.

When we have built our house on the grounds naturalness has been seriously broken into. An abrupt and rectangular aspect presents itself at once. In fact complete lack of harmony has been secured. A Kansas farmer need not become disheartened on account

on account of this prevalent evil, for he has a resource and a remedy near at hand. By a careful selection and use of the best climbers he may break this inharmony. These vines, growing on the porch, wall or fence, will break the abrupt demarkation and bring the house and grounds into a closer harmony. A few of the best plants for this purpose are, the common morning glory, the bitter sweet, the Ampelopsis or Virginia Creeper, the Chinese Wisteria, and one or more of the honey suckles, especially Lonicera Semper-virens.

Our Kansas farmers in beautifying their homes, need not go to extremes. They need no extensive list, even of the hardy plants, and as to high priced and striking novelties they should be extremely reluctant to buy. In fact, simplicity should be the watchword. All surprising arrangements of the lawn, as to bric-a-brac, as to geometrical and extremely artificial flower beds, and as to pretentious rockeries and trellices, we would say discard entirely or deal very sparingly. As to fences most people are unsound and they exhibit the ideas of childhood when they made string fences for their corn cob horses and cattle. Most fences are troublesome, and generally detract, rather than add to beauty. The simplest fence is the best. If not too geometrical in design a good hedge of spruce or privet may be an object of beauty and utility. The uncouth old white wash board fence is not to be harbored any more than the barbarous wire fence. If you must use fences about the house try and cover up the artificiality by the use of shrubs, flowers and vines.

After glancing over the subject of proper landscape gardening for our farmers, it is safe to say, treat your grounds as nature would have it, plant your plants as nature would plant them, and

care for all as nature in conjunction with the intelligent effort of man would care for them; and, altogether, the result will be a beautiful home, which should be the result of man's crowning effort.

Who sows a field or trains a flower
Or plants a tree is more than all,
For he who blesses most is blest;
And God and man may own his worth
Who toils to leave, as his bequest,
An added beauty to the earth.

Whittier.

Part 2.

A Partial List of Trees, Shrubs and Flowers Adapted to
Their Respective Regions.

West and Middle Kansas.

Trees:-

- Green Ash. (*Flaximus viridis.*)
 Catalpa. (*Catalpa speciosa.*)
 Cedar. (*Juniperous Virginiana.*)
 Coffee tree. (*Gymnocladus canadensis.*)
 Red Elm. (*Ulmus fluva.*)
 White Elm. (" *Americana.*)
 Hackberry. (*Cercis canadensis.*)
 Honey locust. (*Gleditschia triacanthos.*)
 Horse Chestnut. (*Aesculus Hippocastanum.*)
 Soft or Silver Maple. (*Acer dasycarpum.*)
 Mulberry. (*Morus Alba-Russian.*)

Oak:-- *Quercus Macrocarpa.*" *tinctoria.*" *Rubra.*" *coccinea.*" *paustris.*Pines:- *Pinus Austriaca.*" *sylvestris.*Russian Olive. (*Elaeagnus Angustifolia.*)Thorn trees. (*Crategus crusgalli.*)(" *coccinea.*)Willow. (*Salix Amygdoloides.*)(" *alba vitillina.*)

Trees, continued.

- Black cherry. (*Prunus serotina*.)
 Choke " (" *Americana*.)
 Walnut. (*Juglans Nigra*.)

Shrubs.

- Juneberry. (*Amalanchier canadensis*.)
 False Indigo. (*Amorpha fruticosa*.)
 Barberry. (*Berberis vulgaris* and var. *purpurens*.)
 (" *thumbergii*.)
 Siberian pea. (*Caragana arborescens*.)
 Red Bud. (*Celtis occidentalis*.)
 Dogwood. (*Cornus siberica*.)
 (" *sericea*.)
 (" *mas*.)
 Japan Quince. (*Pyrus Japonica*.)
 Wahoo. (*Euonymus atropurpurens*.)
 Lilac. (*Syringa vulgaris*.)
 (" *Persica*.)
 Mock Orange. (*Philadelphus Coronaria*.)
 Native Currant. (*Ribes aureum*)
 Honeysuckles. (*Lonicera tartarica*.)
 (" *Halliana*.)
 (" *Sempervirens*.)
 Spiraea. (*Spiraea VanHouttii*.)
 (" *Billardii*.)
 Roses. (*Rosa Rugosa*.)
 (" *Sitigera-Prairie Rose*.)
 (" " var. *Baltimore Belle*.)
 (" " " *Prairie Queen*.)

Shrubs, continued.

Roses. Ramblers. (Yellow Rambler--Aglaiia.)

(White " Thalia.)

(Crimson ")

Rosa rebinosa-a sweet Briar.)

Pengances Hybrids.

Lucy Ashton.

Anne of Geirstiye.)

Madam Plantier.

Magna Charta.

General Jacqueminat.

John Hopper.

La Franc.

Flowers:-

Helianthus.	Gladiolus.
Hollyhock.	Hyacinthus.
Peony.	Castor Beans.
Phlox. (Phlox paniculata.)	Sweet Peas.
(" subulata.)	Iris.
Golden Rod.	Tulip.
Dianthus.	Yucca.
Nasturtium.	Poppy.
Petunias.	Balsam.
	Columbine.
	Asters.

For Eastern Kansas. This region will include all named for the western part and the following:-

Trees:

Birch. (Bitula Alba.)

English Elm. (Ulmus campestris.)

Trees, continued.

- Baswood. (*Tilia Americana.*)
 Maple. (*Acer saccharinum.*)
 (" *dasycarpum*--cut leaved.)
 (" *tartarica.*)
 Pines. (*Pinus strobur.*)
 (" *pungens.*)
 Spruces. (Colorado blue and the White.)
 Tulip. (*Liriodendron tulipifers.*)
 Horn bean. (*Carpinus Americana.*)
 Sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis.*)
 Black Locust. (*Robinia Pseudacacia.*)
 Hickory. (*Carya -----.*)
 Douglas Spruce. (*Pseudotsuga taxifolia.*)
 Oak. (*Quercus imbricaria.*)

Shrubs:-

- Hydrangea. (*H. paniculata* -var. *grandifolia.*)
 Pearl Bush. (*Exochorda grandifolia.*)
 Wigelia. (*Weigelia candida.*)
 Golden Bell (*Forsythia suspensa.*)
 Privet. (*Ligustrum vulgare.*)
 Honeysuckle. (*Lonicera caprifolium.*)
 (" *fragrantissima.*)
 Mock Orange. (*Philadelphus Gordonisus.*)
 Snowball. (*Viburnum opulis*- var. *steralis.*)
 Bladder Senna. (*Colutea arborens.*)
 Spiraea. (*Spiraea Revesii.*)
 (" *prunifolia.*)
 Bladder Nut. (*Staphylea trifolia.*)

Shrubs, continued.

Flowering plum. (*Prunus triloba*.)

Plum. (Purple leaved.) (*Prunus pissardii*.)

Crab-Double. (*Pyrus malus angustifolia plena*.)

Part 3.

The Farmers and Flowers.

With the farmer, we generally associate muddy boots, swill besmeared overalls, and shaggy unkempt hair and beard. We are also prone to associate with flowers the spirit world, angles, and dainty human dolls. Our natures and teachings are not responsible for this false association. But it is by our unholy and unscientific way of living that we so widely separate these two factors, which, in nature's laws are inseparable. We have permitted the glittering artificialities of life to so blind us to all natural beauty that we have lost all conception of it.

That flowers, so important in beautiful nature, have a place in a farmers yard is a recognized fact. Many of us say that we do not like flowers; but this is hardly true. If we would stop and analyze our feelings we would find that it is not a dislike for the flowers, but a dislike for the whole, which is rendered unpleasing by the unharmonious relations between the flowers and their surroundings. The position of the flower beds and the arrangement of the flowers in the beds has much to do with our likes and dislikes of flowers. We may see before a house, in a beautiful greensward, a geometrical bed of conspicuous flowers, and from the disagreeableness of the severe contrast we say that such flowers or flowers in general have no place in the garden. Or the hater of flowers may argue that it is not possible to grow these beauties in our soil and climate, probably drawing such conclusions by associating delicacy and beauty with exact and artificial greenhouse conditions. Such conclusions have been drawn without sufficient evidence. We know that such unnatural conditions are not necessary for an ideal perfection of flowers.

The places where the real beauty and value of flowers is brought out are in the foreground border, along the fences, and in the many odd places about the house and grounds. The greensward in the front yard should never be cut up by flower beds. If you desire beds place them in the rear or at the sides of the house. The ideal place for flowers anyway, is not in beds, but along in the foreground border. Here, the position of the flowers is largely dependent on the kind of flower, and the nature and arrangement of the shrubs.

From the nature of domestic life in our country homes it is probably best to plant mostly perennials, as nature will care for them if it has half a chance. It is not necessary to discuss soil, climate, and moisture; neither is it necessary to tell you that in raising flowers it requires work, the soil well prepared for the seed or plant, cultivation and pruning are often essential for best results. Among the best perennials are the Monkshood, columbine, asters, phlox, hollyhocks, goldenrod, peony and many others. (See list.) Perennials are naturally best suited in the border or mixed in with the shrubbery in the foreground. The two in combination when the flowers are reaching out from and in front of the green foliage of the shrubbery make a very attractive picture. Most of the common perennials are hardy and require but little winter protection. A light mulch of clean straw is usually sufficient. To get a start of such flowers it is generally best to plant the seed in a hot bed in early spring, and transplant the young plants one or more times before finally setting them in their respective places.

Success with annuals is best obtained by sowing the seed in well prepared soil where they are to grow and remain. Yet for

more early flowers it may be well to plant the seed in hot beds or boxes earlier in the spring, and afterwards transplant to the flower garden. Here we also find the common error of planting the annuals in beds. It is far better to plant them in the border or along the fence. If the flowers are properly placed in the border a pleasing informality will be secured, and you will have made a perfect woodland border.

Bulbous plants, among the first plants to brighten early in the spring, differ somewhat from the other two classes in their regulation and treatment. The chief value and use of these plants lie in the brilliancy of their early flowers. They are practically devoid of foliage significance. It is a common practice to put these plants in conspicuous beds in the open lawn, but a more appropriate place is in the border along with other plants, but not necessarily mixed up with them. Bulbous plants are usually purchased in the late summer and set out during the months of September and October. They remain in the ground over winter with or without protection, according to the variety. In the spring, they appear early and soon flower. As soon as the leaves have reached maturity most kinds of bulbs should be dug up and either bedded in a shady place, or put in a cool dry cellar for keeping until the next fall. A few of the best bulbous plants are the Iris, Hyacinth, Gladiola, Tulip and Lily. Many of the bulbs show a strong tendency to rot in the soil, especially if heavy and wet. This may be helped by having considerable sand in the soil that is immediately about the bulb, but the roots should be able to reach rich and fertile soil. Many of the imported bulbs are affected by a rot, and it is almost impossible to grow them here. We may avoid this difficulty to a large extent by buying bulbs of American growers who have made it a business to grow bulbs free

from disease.

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Our farm yards, by the use of many attractive and native flowers, may in combination with some of the many others named in the list form a perfect picture of the Garden of Eden. All attempts to be natural require no extravagance, no striking and unnatural objects, and no extensive use of varieties. The primary requirement is that we give an honest share of life's effort to the study and the beautifying of our greatest earthly possession, a home. We should look about us and see the great effort that nature in a one handed way is making to cover up and obliterate the scars that man has produced in his search and strife for the things that satisfy not, neither do they add one iota to the sum total of natural beauty and happiness. If we would comprehend this, and see the wonderful resources of beautiful nature, we would be moved by the noble incentive to combine and use these factors; and by their use secure unity, harmony, and a mind in sympathy with nature. With the attainment of this you will have beautified our Kansas homes.