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A Garden of Continuous Bloom

By THEODORE H. MILLINGTON

This article is to be on continuous blossoming. Blossoming and fruit-bearing is what the garden gives in return for the care one gives the garden.

There are many things a garden does not like and which causes it to restrict its yield. It is in many respects like a bride. It does not like to be left alone. It does not like strained relations. It does not like casual treatment, nor rough handling. But like a bride, it wants constant company, serious attention, loving treatment and gentle handling. It most dislikes a summer vacation to some distant parts. But unlike a bride, it never talks back.

I remember when as a small boy in Northern Europe I was told, on a wet, snowy day, about the first of the year, to go and look for Hellebore blossoms at the edge of the shrubbery, under the snow. With my bare hands I scraped away the snow and some fallen leaves and behold! to my dying day, I shall never forget the beautiful white flower I found in the midst of winter. This little living thing was working with all its might to make somebody happy. Its slightly glossy dark evergreen leaves did not look cold. The plant actually looked as if it were happy in its task. To me there is romance in its name. Hellebore Niger is a native of Greece. Its root has been used medicinally. Its English name is Christmas rose. In German, name, Nicawurtz-Sneezewort; Italian and French, Ellobore. It flowers so early in the year that it sometimes is the last of the preceding year. For a continuous blooming garden she is easily number one in the off months.

Then we have the Snowdrop—*Galanthus Nivalis*, always before snow is off the ground. In Scandinavian countries it is invariably included in the garden. Its popular name here is Gjekke—meaning just. In Italian it is Pianteletto Primavera, meaning Earliest Little Plant; in German it is Schneeglockchen, meaning Little Snowbell; in French, Perce Neige, meaning Snowpiercer.

Trillium! Will I ever forget it? I had dug up, in a deep ravine, a whole bushel basket of Trillium, taking with them lots of leaf-mold, all quite wet.

With much effort I got the basket on one shoulder, climbed to the top and walked a half mile across the fields to my car. They rewarded me every year until some insufferable chump dug them up for weeds.

The Dogwood—*Cornus Florida*, is indigenous to North America. A smallish tree with large white blossoms. Its shrub varieties have red or blue berries, very decorative in winter.

The Japanese Quince—*Cydonia Japonica*—also blossoms before its leaves come out. It has scarlet flowers and golden centers.

Then there are all the varieties of bulbs, like Crocus, Hyacinth, Tulips, Daffodils and don't forget Anemones. It is the early flowers which shorten the Winter and starts Spring early. I mention only a few, but I love them for their ability to advertise their presence and for their promise of Spring. The lack of other flowers and foliage so early makes them conspicuous and they seem anxiously to offer their tiny supply of honey to any venturesome bee coaxed out too early by an unseasonable warmth of the sun.

The late flowers, such as Asters, Chrysanthemums, Cosmos lengthen the end of summer and a few, either red or white, Alpine strawberries picked under the snow seem worth their weight in gold. I once cut Asparagus on Christmas Day in a driving wet snow storm. To be sure they were forced by heaping the dirt over them and then horse manure was piled over these tiny dikes and the heat from it made the Asparagus grow. It was a cold job, but believe me, it was fascinating.

The trees, shrubs, flowers and bulbs in the garden are messages from all the world and evidence of man's successful search for beauty. How many unused Burbanks and explorers do you think it took to furnish your garden? It is through their work that our blossoming season has now almost extended to all the months in the year. The new varieties, hybridizations and importations, carefully added to the seedman's and nurseryman's catalogue, are a never ending intrigue to the garden devotee. If one is fortunate enough to be able to continue the summer's gardening under glass, or even in a good old fashioned South exposed bay-window, the charm, beauty, fragrance and brilliance of colors never leave the garden lover a lonesome hour.

I once observed a box-garden on a N. Y. tenement-house fire-escape. Instinctively I felt that its owners were not underworld members.

Of course, it is not enough to plant these very late and very early shrubs and plants. They need special consideration in shelter, soil and moisture. Your landscape gardener will help you.

The midsummer annuals, perennials, roses, alpine and aquatic plants with their riot of colors are familiar to all and represent a wonderful romance in gardening research and achievements.

Next week we shall consider The Artistic Garden.

CHATS WITH THE Master Gardener

PLANNING YOUR GARDEN

Probably the most important step in making a garden is planning it. Of course, people who garden in a hit-or-miss way sometimes come out all right, but it's been my experience that some planning pays real dividends in extra beauty. One friend of mine—a man who's famous in his community for the wonderful effects he gets in just a small space—told me he always knows exactly what he's going to do with every square foot of his garden before he turns the first forkful of earth.

If I were you, the first thing I'd do in planning a garden would be to make a map of it on a big sheet of paper. And I'd make it pretty carefully to scale, as it is. I'd overlook any space that could contribute to the beauty of my garden.

On this map I'd locate the permanent things, such as trees, shrubbery, and the house. If you have a pool or a rock garden, put them into the map too. Then, around the plan, I'd draw the sizes and shapes of the flower beds.

One of the best ways I know to get gardening ideas is to read seed catalogues. They'll not only give you a wonderful selection of flowers they'll give you a very good idea as to which are best suited for the climate you live in, which will grow best in your kind of soil, when you should plant each variety, and when you can expect to see one to blossom.

When I read seed catalogues I keep a list of the flowers and other plants that appeal to me. And I'm very careful to include some new flowers that I haven't grown before. I've found that one of the most delightful experiences in gardening is in finding new faces in my flower beds each year. It's just like making new friends!

When you have decided on the flowers you're going to grow, the next thing to do is to plot on that map of yours where you're going to put each variety and how much space you can budget for each.

There are a number of things to keep in mind. Some flowers grow a lot taller than others, and the shorter ones have to be set in front where they can be seen. And since flowers don't all blossom at the same season, each flower bed should be planned so that it will have a pleasing variety of flowers in bloom at all times through the year. Color combinations have to be considered, too.

Here's an important thing to remember about your soil. When growing things you plan to grow, you'll need eleven different food elements, every one of which is essential for healthy growth. If at one time to time these food elements become exhausted from the soil and have to be replaced. Because growing plants, just like growing children, can't be strong and healthy without a complete, balanced diet. To avoid all risk, I feed my garden a complete plant food—one that I can be sure will supply all eleven of the needed food elements in scientifically balanced proportions. It pays to give everything you grow a square meal.

AVOIDING FAILURE IN LAWN MAKING

By the Master Gardener

Contrary to general belief, there is no trick to growing a beautiful velvet green lawn. To be sure, certain fundamental principles must be followed, but these are few and very simple to grasp. If your lawn-making efforts have not been crowned with success, try again this spring. If you follow the suggestions below carefully, I can assure you I will have the kind of lawn you've always wanted!

Soil: A sandy loam soil is ideal for a lawn but not a necessity. It is well, however, to approximate this type of soil, which can be done by working in a little sand with soils that are very clayey, or working in a little clay with soils that are very sandy.

Preparation of Seed Bed: Spade the area which is to be made into a lawn to a depth of six inches. If this is not deeper than the top soil covering the area. After spading, work the soil with hoe and rake until it is finely pulverized.

Applying Plant Food: Apply four pounds of complete plant food per one hundred square feet evenly over the area and work it lightly into the top couple inches of soil. This is important for two reasons. First, in an available form, the many food elements grass plants need for healthy growth. Second, as in most things, good seed is false economy. Buy good seed suitable for your climate. Consult your local seedman. Remember that shady areas in your lawn must be seeded with shade tolerant grasses.

Seeding: Apply the seed evenly. If you seed by hand, apply half of the seed lengthwise and the other half crosswise. After seeding, roll the area or tam it with a wooden board to insure good contact of the seed with the soil.

Watering: Immediately after rolling, water the lawn thoroughly using a very fine spray. Water thereafter until the seed germinate, water thoroughly once or twice weekly as needed.

Clipping: Do not clip the new lawn until the grass is three inches high. Never cut it shorter than one and one-half inches. Remove the clippings from the lawn.

It is best to make your lawn as early in spring as possible for when the grass has an opportunity to become established before the hot, trying months of summer.

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