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## NATURE NOW

By LYDIA KING FRESHE

Last week I visited Grandmother's garden. It lay in the late sunlight, the harvest of its neatly patterned beds as abundant as I remember it through all the years. It is still the heart of the old homestead and has been to four generations of my family. It lies in the valley of the Chippewa where the Ohio soils are rich and well tilled, where good farming and good food go hand in hand.

Grandmother was a pioneer typical of her generation. She was the head of a cooperative venture in living which, in addition to the regular routine, included such extra chores as soap and cheese making, herb gathering, sewing, knitting, and quilting plus a seasonal round of canning, preserving and drying of foods.

Her garden not only provided the fruits and vegetables upon which depended her reputation as a good wife and mother, but it also served as an outlet for her creative ability and by its culture she satisfied some of her longing for beauty.

Laid out in convenient beds with neatly tended borders, it was created primarily to feed the family and it seldom failed us. If the June peas were not as fine as we had hoped, the late corn and

tomatoes were sure to make up for this. Its bounty from the first pink rhubarb of April through the green beans and new potatoes of July to the last turnips and parsnips of November was something we lived by.

But if the vegetables were the necessary part of her garden, it was the flowers that edged the borders, the fragrant herbs by the gate, the sweet peas, roses and hollyhocks that decorated the enclosing fence, that Grandmother loved best.

On a Sunday noontime, she either visited friends or entertained them at her generously laden table. If the after-church part of the day included dinner at the home of a friend or relative, the meal had not long been cleared away when all must ad-

join to the garden to see how tall the poplars had become, how golden the squash, how firm the heads of winter cabbage. These were life's essentials. But the spirit too must be fed.

IN A DAY when pleasures were few, and when the hard work began at sun-up and never ended until nightfall, Grandmother took much quiet pleasure in her flowers and herbs. She and her kind did not depend upon seed catalogues and nurseries to replenish their stock. She gave to all from her abundance and received their best in return. No visit to an autumn garden was complete unless the rugel left with her hands full of "slips" and the corners of her Sunday handkerchief tied full of seeds from the choicest plants.

Grandmother had a little flower bed on the shaded side of the summer-house where the soil was well worked. On a day before the family became watered the first frost, these were planted, each in its separate pot, and were appropriately named. Amanda's coleus, Aunt Mary's geranium, Cousin Emma's begonia. These names served us well as identification tags and had a more pleasurable meaning than the botanical labels we now employ.

THUS PLANTED and named they were transferred to the sunny south window in the Big House, where they were lovingly tended all winter. They brightened our days, and when spring came made a nucleus for our next season's garden.

Grandmother's efforts extended beyond the limits of her kitchen garden to an adjoining truck patch where the strawberries and raspberries grew and where the "extra" vegetables were cultivated for canning, drying and storing in the root cellar.

But it was for the front lawn that Grandmother's choicest flowers were saved. It was always decorated with a fine row of canton and variegated coleus plants. Fragrant leaved geraniums grew all along the wall of the Big House and were flanked by bushy clusters of late marigolds set against a background of chrysanthemums: the bed bordered with lantana and verbenas. A white rose, with only a hint of faintest pink at its center, grew by the south gate. Another, with petals as deep as red velvet was by the west gate.

IT WAS THE flower of a lily that I loved with all the passion of my childish heart. Its white curved petals were crimson spotted high. In the years between I have seen its like often, passed into some exotic display in a florist's window. But I think now it always as I saw it there, growing at that spot on the lawn years?



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If you check these things over carefully, your chance of having an unwanted visit from the Fire Department are reduced considerably. So, PLAY IT SAFE. Follow the above recommendations now, before the heavy heating season sets in.

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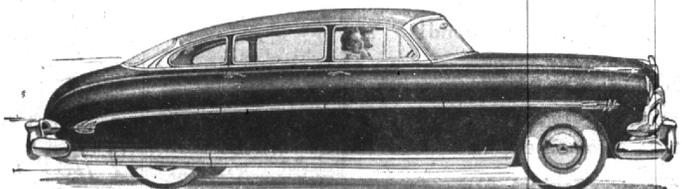
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