

WILD-FLOWER GARDEN.

A wild-flower garden has a most attractive sound. One thinks of long tramps in the woods, collecting material, and then of the fun in fixing up a real for sure wild garden.

Many people say they have no luck at all with such a garden. It is not a question of luck, but a question of understanding, for wild flowers are like people and each has its personality. What a plant has been accustomed to in Nature it desires always. In fact, when removed from its own sort of living conditions, it sickens and dies. That is enough to tell us that we should copy Nature herself. Suppose you are hunting wild flowers. As you choose certain flowers from the woods, notice the soil they are in, the place, conditions, the surroundings, and the neighbours.

Suppose you find dog-tooth violets and wind-flowers growing near together. Then place them so in your own new garden. Suppose you find a certain violet enjoying an open situation; then it should always have the same. You see the point, do you not? If you wish wild flowers to grow in a tame garden make them feel at home. Cheat them into almost believing that they are still in their native haunts.

Wild flowers ought to be transplanted after blossoming time is over. Take a trowel and a basket into the woods with you. As you take up a few, a columbine, or a hepatica, be sure to take with the roots some of the plant's own soil, which must be packed about it when replanted.

The bed into which these plants are to go should be prepared carefully before this trip of yours. Surely you do not wish to bring those plants back to wait over a day or night before planting. They should go into new quarters at once. The bed needs soil from the woods, deep and rich and full of leaf mold. The under drainage system should be excellent. Then plants are not to go into water-logged ground. Some people think that all wood plants should have a soil saturated with water. But the woods themselves are not water-logged. It may be that you will need to dig your garden up very deeply and put some stone in the bottom. Over this the top soil should go. And on top, where the top soil once was, put a new layer of the rich soil you brought from the woods.

Before planting water the soil well. Then as you make places for the plants put into each hole some of the soil which belongs to the plant which is to be put there.

I think it would be a rather nice plan to have a wild-flower garden giving a

succession of bloom from early spring to late fall; so let us start off with March, the hepatica, spring beauty and saxifrage. Then comes April bearing in its arms the beautiful columbine, the tiny bluets and wild geranium. For May there are the dog-tooth violet and the wood anemone, false Solomon's seal, Jack-in-the-pulpit, wake robin, bloodroot and violets. June will give the bellflower, mullein, bee balm and foxglove. I would choose the gay butterfly weed for July. Let turtle head, aster, Joe Pye weed, and Queen Anne's lace make the rest of the season brilliant until frost.

Let us have a bit about the likes and dislikes of these plants. After you are once started you'll keep on adding to this wild-flower list.

There is no one who doesn't love the hepatica. Before the spring has really decided to come, this little flower pokes its head up and puts all else to shame. Tucked under a covering of dry leaves the blossoms wait for a ray of warm sunshine to bring them out. These embryo flowers are further protected by a fuzzy covering. This reminds one of a similar protective covering which new fern leaves have. In the spring a hepatica plant wastes no time on getting a new suit of leaves. It makes its old ones do until the blossom has had its day. Then the new leaves, started to be sure before this, have a chance. These delayed, are ready to help out next season. You will find hepaticas growing in clusters, sort of family groups. They are likely to be found in rather open places in the woods. The soil is found to be rich and loose. So these should go only in partly shaded places and under good soil conditions. If planted with other woods specimens give them the benefit of a rather exposed position, that they may catch the early spring sunshine. I should cover hepaticas over with a light litter of leaves in the fall. During the last days of February, unless the weather is extreme take this leaf covering away. You'll find the hepatica blossoms all ready to poke up their heads.

The spring beauty hardly allows the hepatica to get ahead of her. With a white flower which has dainty tracings of pink, a thin, wiry stem, and narrow, grass-like leaves, this spring flower cannot be mistaken. You will find spring beauties growing in great patches in rather open places. Plant a number of the roots and allow the sun good opportunity to get at them. For this plant loves the sun.

The other March flower mentioned is the saxifrage. This belongs in quite a different sort of environment. It is a plant which grows in dry and rocky places. Often one will find it in chinks of rock. There is an old tale to the effect that the saxifrage roots twine about rocks and work their way into them so that the rock itself splits. Anyway, it is a rock garden plant. I have found it in dry, sandy places right on the borders of a big rock. It has white flower

clusters borne on hairy stems.

The columbine is another plant that is quite likely to be found in rocky places. Standing below a ledge and looking up, one sees nestled here and there in rocky crevices one plant or more of columbine. The nodding red heads bob on wiry, slender stems. The roots do not strike deeply into the soil; in fact, often the soil hardly covers them. Now, just because the columbine has little soil, it does not signify that it is indifferent to the soil conditions. For it always has lived, and always should live, under good drainage conditions. I wonder if it has struck you, how really hygienic plants are? Plenty of fresh air, proper drainage, and good food are fundamentals with plants.

It is evident from study of these plants how easy it is to find out what plants like. After studying their feelings, then do not make the mistake of huddling them all together under poor drainage conditions.

I always have a feeling of personal affection for the bluets. When they come I always feel that now things are beginning to settle down outdoors. They start with rich, lovely, little delicate blue blossoms. As June gets hotter and hotter their colour fades a bit, until at times they look quite worn and white. Some people call them Quaker ladies, others innocence. Under any name they are charming. They grow in colonies, sometimes in sunny fields, sometimes by the road-side. From this we learn that they are more particular about the open sunlight than about the soil.

If you desire a flower to pick and use for bouquets, then the wild geranium is not your flower. It droops very quickly after picking and almost immediately drops its petals. But the purplish flowers are showy, and the leaves, while rather coarse, are deeply cut. This latter effect gives a certain boldness to the plant that is rather attractive. The plant is found in rather moist, partly shaded portions of the woods. I like this plant in the garden. It adds good colour and permanent colour as long as blooming time lasts, since there is no object in picking it.

There are numbers and numbers of wild flowers I might have suggested. These I have mentioned were not given for the purpose of a flower guide, but with just one end in view your understanding of how to study soil conditions for the work of starting a wild-flower garden.

If you fear results, take but one or two flowers and study just what you select. Having mastered, or better, become acquainted with a few, add more another year to your garden. I think you will love your wild garden best of all before you are through with it. It is a real study, you see.

