

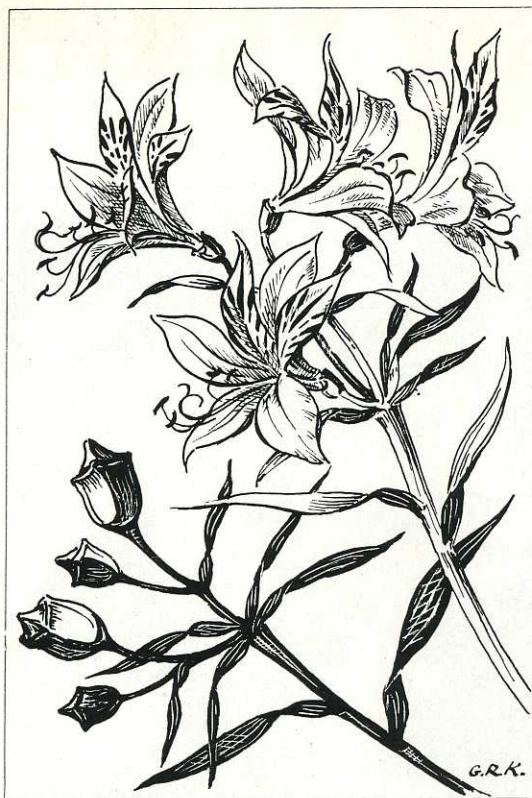
THE BULLETIN OF THE
HARDY PLANT

VOL I NO 5

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1958





ALSTROMERIA AURANTIACA

This liliaceous-like plant *Alstromeria aurantiaca* and commonly known as the Peruvian lily is in fact a native of Chile. The genus is named after an eighteenth century Swedish botanist Baron Alstroemer, who was a friend of Carl Linnaeus. The species has orange flowers, often spotted with chocolate. There are named varieties such as Dover Orange and Moerheim Orange. The flowers of alstromeria last well when cut for indoor decoration. The fleshy fibrous-like roots of this plant thrive best in a well drained sandy soil.

N.J.P.

Drawing by G. R. Kingbourn.

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THE HARDY PLANT SOCIETY BULLETIN

VOL I No 5

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EDITORIAL

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AIMS OF THE SOCIETY

The aims of the Society are to further the culture and improvement of hardy herbaceous plants (excluding rock garden plants) and to stimulate interest in such plants both old and new.

MEMBERSHIP

The yearly subscription (which includes the Society's Bulletins as published) is 12s. 6d. per year, or £1 for joint membership of man and wife, U.S.A. \$2.00. Life membership is £15. Membership also includes free entry to any shows which the Society may hold.

AS GROWERS OF HARDY PLANTS, WHETHER beginner or connoisseur, selector or collector, botanist or greenhorn, this is a very busy season when one is strengthening connections between oneself and the very existence of one's plants.

A gardener is for ever a beginner with some plants, for ever learning and for ever willing to share his knowledge and his plants with others. This is the season when gardening talk and exchange of ideas reach their zenith, and lost in a jargon of our own (which Peterborough of the *Daily Telegraph* seems to have found bewildering at Chelsea), we confide our trials and hopes to anyone who will lend us half an ear.

By the time the Bulletin reaches your hands the border will be an abundant palette of high summer flowers too numerous to mention. Some tried and trusted favourites and others new acquaintances and (let's whisper it) always the odd failure which spurs us on to new enthusiasm. Then, even as we see the results of work and waiting and the thoughts we have lavished on our borders, more work will impose itself upon the conscience, if we are to get to know our plants. One may read and explore the biology and history of a plant and pursue its affiliations past and present but without work a gardener has no knowledge.

Kay N. Sanecki

ORNAMENTAL GRASSES

W. HOWELL, F.L.S.

Phalaris arundinacea variegata has leaves of green and creamy white which are handsome throughout the year.



Photo:—Amateur Gardening.

IT IS EASY to imagine that the modes of garden-planning and planting so vigorously advocated by William Robinson first in his book "The Wild Garden" published in 1870, to be followed in 1883 by the first of several editions of one of the most popular gardening books of the period "English Flower Garden", must have induced an appreciation of the decorative value of ornamental grasses.

Even now, when large gardens are few in number, there is available such a selection of grasses of garden merit that some suitable type may be found for gardens of any size. The choice will be determined by several factors, *e.g.*, space available, ultimate height, type of ornamental feature desired, nature of soil and, finally, location. Obviously, since some of the most useful plants are native to warmer climes those who garden in the southern half of the country have a wider choice.

Where space permits a species or variety of *Cortaderia* (*gynerium*) is indispensable. There are probably not more than three species in general cultivation in this country though the

variable behaviour of *Cortaderia selloana* in differing soils and positions could give rise to the impression that there are several distinct varieties. *C. selloana* is the typical pampas grass with plumes rising to a height of eight to ten feet. Male and female flowers are each borne on separate plants, the plumes of the female plants being much denser, more silken in appearance and lasting longer when cut for indoor decorative arrangements. *C. pumila* is of compact habit with shorter leaves, its plumes seldom reach a height of more than four feet. *C. rendatleri* is another handsome type with four feet high silvery pale pink plumes.

As *Cortaderias* are usually left undisturbed for several years the soil for their reception should be thoroughly prepared and a somewhat sheltered position will minimize risk of the gracefully arching leaves sweeping the surrounding ground. Care must be taken when handling these plants as the leaves are sharply serrated.

Miscanthus, often referred to as *eulalia*, is another of the taller growing

ornamental grasses which has long been a favourite in British gardens. The flowering stems usually attaining a height of from five to seven feet terminating in a number of elegantly poised racemes each of which is crowded along its length with silken appendages arising from the bases of the spikelets. *Miscanthus sinensis* has green leaves which in established plants may be up to three-quarters of an inch wide at the base and gradually tapering to a point with tips arching and with a light coloured central vein. The plant is of stiffer appearance than is the case with cortaderias.

In my experience the type plant is more vigorous than its varieties which are usually grown for their coloured foliage. These varieties are *m. variegatus*, which has green and white striped leaves and, *m. zebrinus*, with almost continuous bands of yellowish-white across the width of its leaves. *Miscanthus* is tolerant of a wide range of situations and is often

preferred because of its reasonably tidy habit of growth.

There are many species of *Stipa* distributed over various parts of the world, most are of economic importance though a few are weeds, while a few are used as ornamental garden plants. Of these latter it is usually possible to obtain seeds of and occasionally plants of *Stipa pennata* and *S. gigantea*. *S. pennata*, a native of Europe, is a densely tufted plant with narrow elongated, almost completely rolled leaves and bears thin panicles on which arise the numerous feathered awns which may be several inches long. These flowering plumes reaching a height of about two feet arch gracefully, endowing the plant with an eye-catching charm. *S. gigantea* grows to about three feet high and has similar fascinating long awns. Stock of this plant is, however, more difficult to obtain. Both revel in a light soil with a sunny position and give a much more impressive display

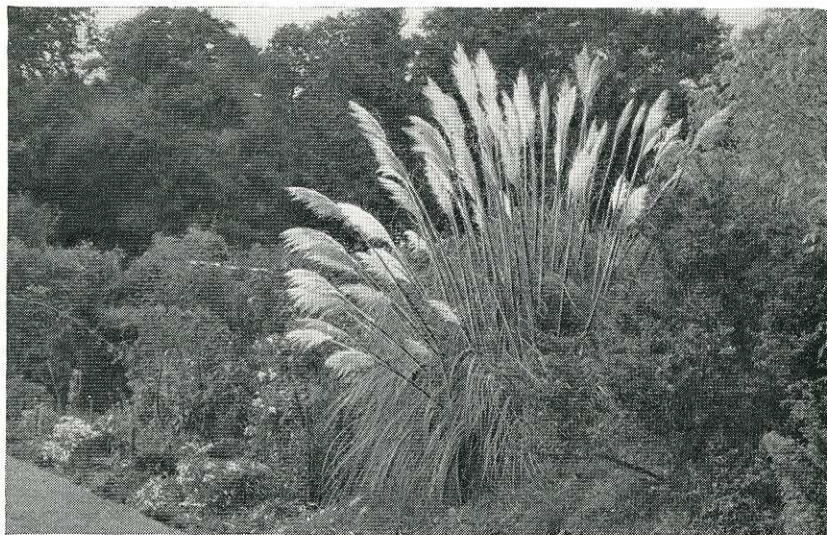


Photo:—Amateur Gardening.

Cortaderia selloana, a hardy tall-growing pampas grass which makes a most striking border plant.

when grouped in plantings of three or four plants than they present when grown singly.

Panicum virgatum, a plant of wide distribution throughout the United States of America, is one of the most frequent occurrence in British gardens of several useful species which it seems reasonable to suppose would flourish over here, if seeds or plants were more readily available. In general appearance it is very similar to our native millet grass, *Milium effusum*, and the elegant panicles may be up to three feet high. It thrives in a sunny or a semi-shaded position.

There are several British grasses which because of the attractiveness of their flowering heads merit consideration for garden use, especially in those areas where non-native plants are not so happy, but because of their abundance in the hedgerows, on the downs and near the seashore it seems that little thought is given to according them a place in the garden. I mean such plants as the quaking or totter grass, *Briza media* which is, in my opinion, more elegant in bearing than the heavier looking alien, annual *B. maxima*. Then there are the brachypodiums found abundantly in semi-shaded positions, whose awned spikelets are suspended from the gracefully sagging, thin branchings of the panicles; also the lyme grass, *Elymus arenarius* with its large bluish-grey leaves and its stiff, spiked flower heads is an attractive plant for border use and the elegant glycerias found in damp places.

Grasses with variegated leaves are more frequently seen in many gardens. Probably the most attractive of these is the ribbon grass, *Phalaris arundinacea picta*. The large leaves with parallel stripes of green and creamy



Photo:—Amateur Gardening
This hardy grass *Miscanthus Sinensis Zebrinus*, has yellow-banded leaves.

white retain their clean brightness throughout the year. There are also variegated forms of several other native grasses such as *Dactylis glomerata*, *Molinia caerulea*, *Glyceria maxima* and *Holcus mollis* which will thrive in a variety of soils and are all worthy border plants.

One final observation, most of the perennial types are readily increased by division, therefore, the work of separating and replanting may be carried out either in the autumn or in March and April, my experience prompts me to say that, in southern parts of the country at least, the latter period is the better provided that the plants are kept sufficiently watered.



A natural hybrid between *Achillea filipendulina* and *A. clypeolata*, Coronation Gold, is a valuable border plant. It received an Award of Merit on June 17, 1958.

Achillea Coronation Gold

R. B. POLE

ACHILLEA CORONATION GOLD is what may be called a 'lucky find'. It was in the autumn of 1949 that I found a number of seedling achilleas in the nursery in and around a bed of *Achillea filipendulina* (*A. eupatorium*). I was rather short of stock of this plant at the time so I planted them out in a small bed. The following spring, I was greatly surprised to find some of them showing buds and to see that the foliage was not the good green of *A. eupatorium* and I came to the conclusion that they were seedlings of *A. clypeolata* some of which had been growing a short distance from where I had found the seedlings. It was soon obvious, however, that they were a cross between *A. filipendulina* and *A. clypeolata*, the foliage assuming a soft grey green between the green of *A. filipendulina* and the silver of *A. clypeolata* and the height, similarly in between that of the parents. The flowering period extended to that of both parents together, from June to October and often into November.

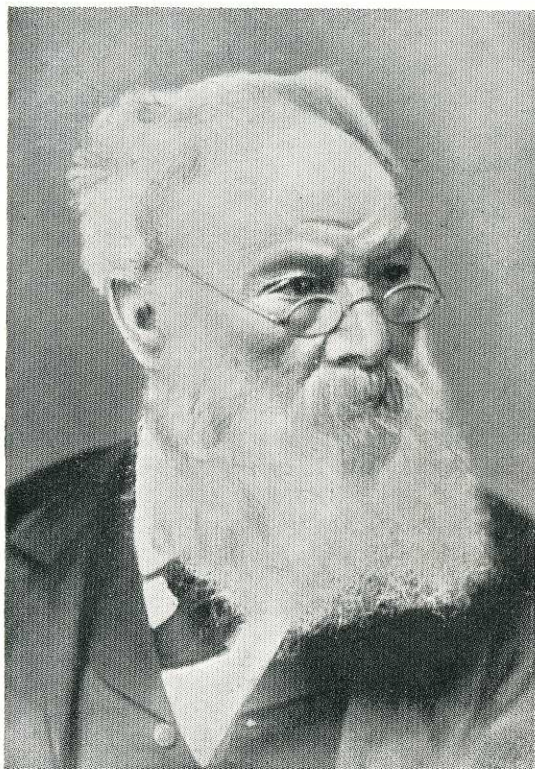
I worked up a stock and was persuaded by Mr. Alesworth of the Horticultural Trade Journal to show the plant and I first took it to the Royal Horticultural Society's show on June 23rd, 1953 and then again on July 28th of the same year. It was favourably reported as 'a good plant with a good name'. One gentleman attending the show was not so pleased, saying to his lady, in loud tones, 'Just look at that, it is a wild flower, the R.H.S. ought not to allow such things to be shown!' I fear he would be shocked to know that it appeared not only at the R.H.S. but at most other notable shows throughout the country and received favourable comment from the Press for five months consecutively in 1957.

It grows to a height of $2\frac{1}{2}$ ft. and is very floriferous, and produces bright mustard yellow flowers which are very reliable as cut flowers lasting literally for weeks. It dries very well for winter decoration and keeps its good golden colour.

THEY WORKED WITH PLANTS

THREE GENERATIONS OF KELWAYS

Christine Kelway is the Great-granddaughter of the first James Kelway



James Kelway I who founded the firm at Langport in 1851 devoted the major part of his energy to the improvement of the gladiolus.

THE LATE JAMES KELWAY, who died in 1952 at the age of 81, came of a line of plantsmen, for his father and his grandfather before him had devoted their long lives to the study and raising of hardy plants. In 1851 my great grandfather James Kelway, founded the firm of Kelways

at Langport in Somerset where it still is, and his name very soon became associated with the cultivation of the gladiolus. Indeed he was the pioneer in this country for raising and exhibiting the large-flowered (*gandavensis*) gladiolus and was referred to in the press of those days as 'The King of Gladiolus Culture, who has spent nearly seventy years in bringing them to their present state of perfection'.

I have beside me, as I write, an article he read to the Royal Horticultural Society in 1890, which differs little from the advice we are given to-day on their cultivation. He should certainly have known what he talked about, for at that time nearly forty acres at Langport were given up to growing of gladioli, and a familiar sight to be seen walking among them was the sturdy and heavily-bearded figure of this great flower lover. To this

speciality he soon added the improvement of the delphinium, the paeony, and the pyrethrum, and Kelways established a reputation as growers of new varieties of these hardy plants and exhibited them with great success at the Royal Horticultural, Crystal Palace, and Alexandra Palace Exhibitions.

When he had taken the pyrethrum in hand it had been rather an insignificant flower but before long the most attractive new kinds were being exhibited at the shows, and the rich blood-crimson James Kelway is still one of the very best singles we have. With delphiniums he was equally successful and by 1897 an acre of the most beautiful new varieties was being grown in a field bordering the main road at Langport which excited great interest among passers-by.

When at the turn of the century Kelways first flowered corms of *Gladiolus primulinus* (The Maid of the Mist), sent to them in 1904 by Sir Francis Fox from the Victoria Falls on the Zambesi, it was clear that there were great possibilities in hybridising these light, graceful flowers of soft butter yellow with those of the highly coloured but more massive blooms of the popular large-flowered gladioli. William Kelway, son of the founder, who had taken over management of

the firm in 1899, was fortunately as devoted to the task of raising new varieties of plants as his father had been, and immediately set about raising an entirely new race of gladioli, exhibiting them both in this country and on the Continent with the greatest success.

His success was due to a great love of flowers and an equal capacity for hard work, since even towards the end of a long life (he died at the age of 96), he rose at six each morning and when weather permitted would be out in the nurseries marking and appraising his beloved flowers. In those days hours of work were from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. less half an hour for breakfast and an hour for dinner for six days in the week, and he was usually the first on the spot in the mornings and the last to leave at night. He was a member of the Somerset County Council, but apart from this his chief recreation was his visits to Paris for the French Exhibitions.



A part of Messrs. Kelway's nursery at Langport, Somerset, known as Paeony Valley, where in June thousands of paeonies can be seen.

If any plant is more closely associated with the name of Kelway than any other it is the paeony, for when my great grandfather became interested in it there were very few varieties, but under him, followed by his son William, and later again my father, another James Kelway, the firm raised scores of new paeonies for

trated on the front cover. The first corms were sent to him at Langport by Captain Erskine, British representative at Gore, in Abyssinia, in 1925, and I well remember them being flowered in the garden of our home. My father was anxious for this new scented flower to be called Erskini, but the discoverer wished it named after

his wife, and they dubbed it *Gladiolus murielae*. Though given an Award of Merit by the British Gladiolus Society in 1932 it was later decided by the botanists that though akin to the genus gladiolus it was a new variety of *Acidanthera bicolor*.

Some years after the death of his grandfather in 1891 James Kelway II had begun to develop the wholesale seed trade of the business and was himself in Hungary inspecting hundreds of acres of the firm's garden peas grown there when the first World War was declared. Like every other horticultural business Kelways suffered great hardship from two wars, when



Paeonia Kelway's Glorious, a double white, which the raisers consider to be their most outstanding variety.

which it became justly famous. Their Paeony Valley in June is one of the loveliest sights it is possible to see and should be visited by all paeony lovers. Though a County Councillor, a magistrate and at one time a leading figure in local politics, most of the life of James Kelway II was given up to the raising of hardy plants. His greatest love was undoubtedly the paeony as we read in his book "Garden Paeonies" published in 1954 after his death.

He was responsible too for the introduction into this country of *Acidanthera bicolor murielae*, as illustrated on the front cover.

their stocks of hardy plants had to be drastically reduced and essential crops grown instead. Before the last war the firm became a limited company under the directorship of Mr. Owen Lloyd, who from 1940 to 1947 worked arduously for the Somerset Agricultural Committee, and it is really surprising that the firm was able to get through the years 1940-44 and this was only done by cutting down labour very drastically and concentrating on farm crops. In 1951 Kelways celebrated its centenary and to their specialities of paeonies, gladioli, pyrethrums and delphiumins added that of irises.

HOW TO COLLECT, DRY AND SAVE SEED

W. K. ASKETT

THE FIRST QUESTION that could be asked on this subject is 'Is it worth while?' My general answer would be . . . 'For species, yes, for varieties (or should I say cultivars?), no! Seeds, where available, obviously provide a quick and easy means of bulk increase for plants needed in quantity, as for naturalizing.

Many hybrids and varieties are sterile and many species do not often set seeds in our climate. However, some do and with several it is the only practical method of increase. Before starting to write this I set myself a little exercise with a copy of a comprehensive wholesale catalogue of hardy plants from which I compiled two lists. List A was of those sorts from which I considered it worth while to save seeds and it added up to the oddly familiar number of fifty-seven. List B was of those kinds I felt sure would not repay the trouble and these only numbered twenty-eight, nearly two-thirds of which belonged to the Natural Order Compositae. This number seemed small and then I realized that it included such large groups as the Michaelmas daisies, solidago, heleniums and heliopsis each counting as only one item.

It is generally conceded that the best results in growing are secured by those who work with nature and not against her. In the case of collecting seeds however, we need to circumvent some of nature's methods of seed dispersal if we wish to collect a crop and sow it under our own control. Thus, explosive pods must be collected and confined before they fling their contents afar, and those with fluffy parachutes must be saved before they sail off on a sudden breeze. In cases

like these intelligent anticipation is needed so that an essential minimum of the final stage of ripening process is completed artificially.

With the ordinary straight forward seeds that have none of these snags, e.g. campanulas, papavers, coreopsis, and delphiniums I find it is usually satisfactory to cut the entire head or spike as soon as the first seeds are thoroughly ripe and drop it into a deepish box like a shoe box or into a paper bag of adequate size. After a little drying, plenty of seed usually falls out and quite often no sifting or cleaning at all is required.

With those seeds liable to fly, a perforated lid or cover or a piece of glass over the boxes (and holes in the sides for air) or the necks of the bags *loosely* tied, should be sufficient protection. It seems to me that the drying of seeds is often overdone and it is well to remember that seeds are living plants in a state of arrested development and should not be subjected to harsh treatment. Having grown to this size from the original fertile cell they are awaiting favourable conditions for germination.

Naturally seed should be collected in dry weather if possible, and if this cannot be done I feel the initial drying should be just sufficient to prevent the seeds from being attacked by mildew. Once satisfactorily harvested and dried most seeds are better stored in a cool place. Moving air will dry better than mere heat, a fact well known to the former islanders of St. Kilda, who manage to dry fish, fowl and flesh for winter use in their primitive stone built 'Cletts' in that cool and moist maritime climate.

I am convinced that a hot dry place

is not the best place to store seed and that cooler conditions are preferable. I am also sure that seeds should not be stored longer than is absolutely necessary and as a facultative pessimist of the type that wears a belt as well as braces I believe in spreading my risks. In practice this means that if I have enough seed I like to divide it up and sow some as soon as practicable after it is ripe, keeping back some for a second sowing in spring. Anything that ripens before August can be sown at once and some things even later, but tiny seedlings of bulbous plants and many other monocotyledons are unlikely to germinate until the following spring and may be sown at once, or in the autumn. This is far better for them than storage until spring, and in fact, I favour a lot of autumn and winter sowing out of doors as it eases the spring rush in many ways and freezing often seems to help germination especially with hard seeds like those of bulbs, aquilegia, paeonia, dictamnus, helleborus and others like primula, meconopsis, hosta and aconitum. A relevant point here is that for open air sowing I like to give the pots boxes or beds a final covering of a coarse sand or grit as this breaks up heavy raindrops and thus helps to prevent the seed being washed out in storms or the soil being heavily consolidated on the surface.

If you intend to collect seeds do take them from the best plants and mark them when they are in flower. The label can then go in the box or bag with the seeds, thus saving double work. Do put some sort of label with all seeds when they are saved; neither you nor I can recognize them all months afterwards as I have often found to my surprise and chagrin. A few seed pockets and the little plastic tubes used for collecting insects (so much safer than glass!) are just right to have ready in the pocket for the unexpected 'find'.

Certain seed that are sticky like podophyllum and some primulas or woolly like some anemones, can be readily separated and partially dried for easier handling by rubbing them gently but thoroughly in a little fine dry sand. I feel that certain fleshy berries like some of those of the woodland plants say smilacina, polygonatum, and actaea are likely to do best if stratified in pots or boxes of sand as is done with the seeds of many shrubs and trees, or, better still, if they can be sown out of doors at once after collecting.

An old domestic meat safe is an excellent seed store and is mouse-proof too. A basket hung from the roof of a cool room is good and less accessible to vermin than a shelf. Finally, do keep an eye open for the odd pod on rare plants and if you should get seeds on your *Paeonia cambessedesii*, the opening pods are most decorative but the shiny black seeds are the good ones and the bright red ones are the duds.

Cleaning, when required at all, is usually a very simple operation merely wanting two sieves for each size of seed, one to retain the seed, the other to let it through thus removing the fractions above and below it in size. Much can be done otherwise by winnowing either by the breath or with bellows or by dropping the seed in a draught on to a large sheet of paper so that the lighter rubbish blows away. Another method useful with practice is to put the seed in a shallow box lid, which is then tilted and tapped rapidly so that light rubbish rises to the top and can be removed. For my own sowing I often do not bother to clean seed to a seedsman's standard, but sow a lot of chaff with it if it is difficult to separate. It never seems to matter much at any rate not for outdoor sowing.

The Reserve Border

J. P. WOOD, N.D.H.

ONE of the pleasures of a garden is the satisfaction of having flowers for cutting. In the average size garden, however, there is a limit to the amount of flowers that can be cut from borders without spoiling their attractiveness. This is why it is so useful to have a reserve border where plants can be grown mainly for cut flowers. It can be in the vegetable garden or any other convenient position and as it is functional and not ornamental the plants can be grown in rows so that it is easier for hoeing and weeding.

Apart from providing flowers for cutting the reserve border can also serve as a nursery where young plants can be grown on until they are ready for planting in ornamental borders.

So that the plants do well the ground must be in fair condition. Good flowers cannot be expected from poor soil and an unfavourable situation. If the reserve border is in the vegetable garden the soil is likely to be fairly good as it will have been dug and enriched with compost or other humus forming material. A dressing of bone-meal before planting will help to encourage good growth.

Not all herbaceous plants are ideal for use as cut flowers and it is wise to choose those that are good for cutting. There are numerous varieties of *Chrysanthemum maximum* all of which have white or creamy-white flowers. Occasionally, flowers are seen in florists shops which are pink or yellow in colour. These are not something new as the flowers have been dyed. *Esther Read*, *Wirral Pride* and *Wirral Supreme* are all excellent varieties for cutting as well as being good border plants.

Ipswich Beauty and *Witral Flame* are two good *gaillardias*. The former has red and yellow, daisy-like flowers



Photo: Amateur Gardening.
Scabiosa caucasica and its many varieties make ideal cut flowers.

with stiff stems and the latter has red flowers.

Pyrethrums are very useful for cutting and there are a great number of varieties in shades of pink, white, scarlet and crimson. The flowering season is from May until July and one of the best pink varieties is *Eileen May Robinson*. It has single flowers but there are several with double flowers.

Another popular flower for cutting is *scabious*. It is, however, fussy about soil and does not like heavy wet ground. Planting should be done in early spring in good well drained soil. *Clive Greaves* is one of the best varieties and the flowers are of a lavender-mauve shade; *Mrs. Isaac House* is a fine white variety. It is interesting to know that Mr. House of Bristol has been largely responsible for the improvement brought about with *scabious* and I understand he has interesting new varieties coming along.

Alstroemarias are delightful for cutting, particularly the *Ligtu* hybrids in soft pastel shades of orange, yellow and pink. A warm, sunny position and good well drained soil is, however, necessary for the plants to thrive.

Italian Herbaceous Plants in British Gardens

HENRY COCKER, A.H.R.H.S.

Director of the gardens at Villa Taranto, Pallanza

THE PHYSICAL and geographical characteristics of Italy make it impossible to treat the country as a whole when discussing the country's flora and its value to British gardens. A glance at the map of Europe will show that Italy extends from the high mountain regions of the Swiss frontier, to the almost sub-tropical, coastal area of the central Mediterranean. Such a variety of geographical and physical features logically produces a varied and contrasting climate. This, in turn, has resulted in a remarkably varied vegetation which ranges from true alpines from the glacial areas, to many tender subjects which could not be considered hardy in Great Britain. It is due to this variation of flora that Italy is so loved by gardening minded tourists, and this great variety of climates makes the cultivation of plants a matter of particular interest. Apart from its native flora, few countries of similar size can grow such a variety of crops as rice, alpines, herbaceous plants, olives, cherries, maize, tobacco, peaches, cacti, strelitzias, mimosa, roses, rhododendrons, grapes, sugar beet, lemons, camellias, grapefruit, carnations, apples, etc.; in the open ground in one part of the country or another.

Between these extremes of different types of vegetation there are numerous hardy herbaceous plants which have proved to be ideal for general garden cultivation in the more temperate and more uniform climate of the British Isles. British visitors to this country are frequently surprised to find some of their own garden favourites such as *Arnica montana*, and *Anchusa italica* growing wild here in the greatest profusion, and it is interesting to note what a large number of herbaceous plants in British gardens are of Italian origin. It is even more interesting to note that a lot of Italian species are still comparatively little grown in British gardens, and the enterprising visitor to this country generally collects various items for trial in his or her garden at home. When collected from the temperate zones, such as the plains of Lombardy or Piedmont, the plants generally settles down very well in British gardens; a fact I am frequently made aware of by the requests for identification I receive from visitors who have taken plants home.

During a recent trip through the mountains south of Rome, one of the most beautiful sights along the roadside was the masses of *Asphodelus albus* in flower. The tall, white flower spikes were growing in the greatest profusion in a variety of positions, ranging from full sun to full shade, and they should be ideal plants for the herbaceous border. Another lovely, easily grown plant well enough known in English kitchen gardens is *Cichorium intybus* (chicory), but it is less known as a flowering herbaceous plant. If left to develop naturally it reaches a height of from 3-4 feet and produces an abundance of attractive flowers of an intense, clear blue rarely equalled in any other flower. Many people who grow this plant as a vegetable in England, completely fail to recognize it when they see it growing wild here in full flower. *Paeonia officinalis* has, perhaps, the most spectacular individual flower of any native plant in this country and its lovely, carmine coloured blooms are as beautiful as any garden hybrid.

Geranium tuberosum makes a magnificent show when seen growing wild, and its value is already fully appreciated in British gardens; but the small, yellow flowered *Digitalis ambigua*, while much less grown, is a very hardy plant of great beauty and distinction. The tall *Verbascum olympicum* is a common weed in Italian gardens, but its 5-6 ft. high yellow flower spikes make it a useful plant for the back of the herbaceous border. A widely distributed meadow weed is *Salvia horminum*, although an annual it is an excellent plant for naturalizing or for the wild garden where, in a mass, its fine blue flowers can be seen to best advantage. As is so often the case when dealing with common, easily grown species, one can introduce into the garden plants which, while of undoubted beauty, can eventually become dangerous pests, if not kept under reasonable control.

Among the bulbous plants which are native of Italy and which are of value to British gardens, the following are all of outstanding beauty and can be found growing wild in this country in the greatest profusion: *Colchicum autumnale*, *Erythronium dens-canis*, *Narcissus poeticus*, *Muscari botryoides*, *Galanthus nivalis*, etc. Numerous hardy ophrys and orchis are also very common and, of course the magnificent *Lilium martagon*.

In the alpine meadows *Polygonum bistorta*, provides sheets of pink from May to August; while an old favourite in gardens is *Aconitum napellus*, but until it has been seen growing wild it is impossible to fully appreciate the true beauty of this Italian native.

In a country with a climate so varied as that of Italy, and where the long, hot summers are so encouraging to growth, it is not surprising that a great many plants which have been introduced to gardens in Italy, should find conditions so much to their liking that within a few years of their introduction they have escaped into the surrounding fields and become naturalized. They soon become absorbed into the local flora and provide many problems for the collector who is seeking true native material. Apart from the many trees and shrubs which have behaved in this manner; from the Villa Taranto gardens alone such herbaceous plants as *Maclaya cordata*, *M. microcarpa*, *Asclepias phytolaccoides*, *Rudbeckia speciosa*, and *Coreopsis grandiflora* have escaped and gone native.

Water plants, which are true natives of Italy, and which are freely cultivated in English gardens are *Trapa verbanensis* and *Vallisneria spiralis*, while plants such as *Nymphaea alba* and *Iris pseudacorus* are weeds in both countries.

The British gardener in Italy will, at the appropriate season, find in abundance many old friends such as *Papaver rhoeas*, *Centaurea cyanus*, *Scabiosa columbaria*, *Centaureum vulgare*, *Primula vulgaris*, *Convallaria majalis*, etc., filling the woods and fields. Local children in the country districts earn quite a lot of pocket money selling bunches of lily-of-the-valley blooms to passing motorists.

Here are a few herbaceous plants of very easy culture, which are native of Italy and which do not appear to be grown in Great Britain as extensively as their attractiveness merits. *Anthemis cupaniana* silver white flowers and foliage, June/August. *Arisarum proboscideum* brownish flowers often thought to resemble long-tailed mice, surrounded by round, green leaves. *Arum italicum* creamy white flowers in spring. *Gladiolus communis* pink flower spikes 1 ft., June/July. *Hedysarum coronarium* red flowers, trailing habit, summer. *Linaria dalmatica* glaucous-grey foliage, spikes of yellow flowers in summer, 4 ft. *Paradisea lilastrum* white, fragrant, lily-like flowers in June, 1 ft. *Phyteuma orbiculare* blue, 1 to 2 ft., July. *Salvia glutinosa*, pale yellow, 3 ft., July/Sept.

COMPETITION

THE committee are anxious to find an emblem for the Society suitable for use on the bulletin, letter heading, etc., and one which would also make a pleasing badge. A competition is being organized in which members are asked to submit their suggestions for such an emblem, and a prize of horticultural books to the value of thirty shillings is offered. The entries will be considered more for their suitability to the purpose than for the execution of the drawing.

RULES

- (1) More than one entry may be made and competitors must be members of the Society and must have paid their subscription for 1958.
- (2) Drawings should be in pen and ink, preferably, but pencil or watercolour will also be accepted.
- (3) Actual size should be indicated and colours suggested.
- (4) Entries should reach the Hon. Editor before October 31st, 1958.
- (5) Postage should be enclosed if competitors wish to have their work returned.

Hawthorn Cottage,
Blind Lane
Bourne End, Bucks.

HON. EDITOR
MRS. KAY N. SANECKI

OUR TRIP TO OXFORD AND WATERPERRY

As organiser and onlooker it would appear from the success of our second annual outing that these are occasions when members not only enjoy themselves socially but benefit from the hardy plants they see. Indeed, two members travelled from Nottinghamshire and one from Derbyshire, their interest and enthusiasm is commendable.

Although our trip from London to Oxford took slightly longer than scheduled and rain greeted us at the University of Oxford Botanic Garden, the Curator, Mr. G. W. Robinson made the tour both interesting and instructive. The two beds of variegated foliage plants, grown to find out more about viruses in variegated plants, were most intriguing. An excellent example of one of the plants was *Tovara virginiana variegata* (*syn Polygonum virginianum variegatum*) which has been known for over 80 years has

not changed or varied its spots, which makes one wonder do viruses adversely effect all plants; for the plants we saw of tovara were a picture of health.

After lunch we made our way to Waterperry Horticultural School. On arrival most of our party listened to Miss Havergal, the principal of the school, who gave an instructive lecture and demonstration on the propagation of hardy plants. This was followed by a visit around the well kept hardy plant borders and nursery beds. There was not a weed to be seen anywhere, and the rows of phloxes, asters, delphiniums and *Chrysanthemum maximum* varieties all looked extremely well grown, clean and healthy. It was good to see the rose-pink *Sidalcea* Rev. Page Roberts, which was awarded an A.M. on July 16, 1936, it is still a fine plant.

N.J.P.

Herbs as Perennial Border Plants

KAY N. SANECKI

THROUGH THE LAST four centuries the floral introductions to our gardens have been legion in number and the herbs have tended to take second or even third place in our minds and indeed in nurserymen's catalogues where they are often merely lumped together as innominate herbs. Consequently they have made a singular escape from the hybridists clutch and have maintained their old-world charm, with the obvious exceptions of *verbascum*, *digitalis*, and *monarda*.

As decorative and useful border plants there is little doubt that some should be included for the striking beauty of their foliage. The black form of *Foeniculum vulgare* has blackish red filmy foliage and typical umbellifous flower heads of buff-yellow, and planted in association with *Veronica gentianoides* or with *Linum narbonnense* and the yellow *L. arboreum* provides a striking and unusual foil. The foliage is delicate and threadlike and the new growth resembles miniature fox tails, and it is the detail that is attractive, hence foeniculum together with other black-leaved plants is not one to choose for garden effect. The foul-smelling *Ruta graveolens*, synonymous in the minds of all English-speaking peoples and most Europeans with regrets, has delightful glaucous foliage, light and deeply cut and the bright yellow flowers in August are quite effective. Even the discerning planner of the perennial border will elect to include the grey-leaved artemisias and santolinas, the former affording a variety of leaf

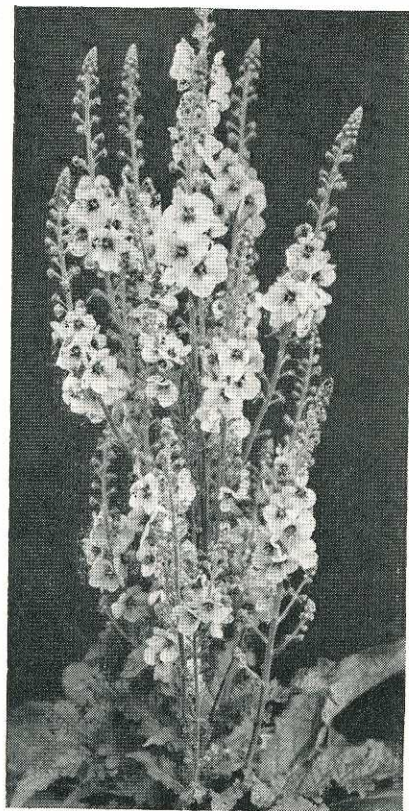


Photo:—Amateur Gardening

The spires of *Verbascum thapsus* are probably the best known herb commonly planted for decoration.

form and choice of height. *Artemisia purshiana*, very similar to *A. ludoviciana* (the so-called white sage, but not a sage at all!) is invaluable for a grey effect and grows only to about 2 ft. the leaves remaining white on both surfaces. *Artemisia ludoviciana* itself seems to be more commonly used, providing a perfect foil for pink and blue flowers and requiring no staking for its thickly tomentose growth—especially on the under sides of the leaves. *A. lactiflora* is far from being a grace and favour plant as it comes into its own at the back of the border with

plumes of frosty foliage and white compositous flowers coinciding very happily with the Michaelmas daisies.

The commercialisation of many plants has obliterated their true simpler form, and the hybridist, forever seeking what he believes to be superior, has blinded us to the daintiness of many of the types; but fortunately, hybridisation is not achieved by the flick of the illusionist's fingers and the form itself maintains a treasured place in many gardens. This is probably most true of the representative members of the natural order Schropulariaceae: *verbascum*, *mimulus*, *digitalis* and *veronica*. An interesting phrase appears in a book published by Country Life in 1916, "Profitable Herb Growing and Collecting", with reference to *Verbascum thapsus*, our native Aaron's Rod, where the author says ". . . (it) is an important herb found wild in fair quantity but which would benefit from cultivation as, like the foxglove, its leaves are subject to fungoid diseases". In both instances it is the leaves which contain the active principles as herbs and are the parts of the plants to be collected. As a border plant *Verbascum thapsus* is biennial and grows up to 3½ ft. with pale yellow flowers from midsummer till August. In the wild state some natural hybrids of *thapsus* have been recorded but it is *V. phoenicium*, another biennial, an introduced plant or a garden escape where it appears wild in Britain, that is the parent of most of our garden hybrids. Harkness Hybrid and Miss Willmott were two of the early ones but now there are many popular garden hybrids, all sterile. This fact has proved a barrier to hybridists working on the genus during the last ten years, though the introduction of new species from the expeditions of Mr. Peter Davis has no doubt proved an impetus. But as

garden plants all can, of course, be propagated by root cuttings.

The tuberous tap root-like stock of *Aconitum Napellus* is highly poisonous and a potential danger especially if there are any cuts on the hands, as they contain aconite and aconitine. The fresh flower heads are used in homeopathy, a straight spur indicating a better medicinal variety than the curved spur. *Aconitum napellus* itself is an admirable border plant though the deeper Spark's variety is preferable. The bicolor *A. variegatum* and the white form are worthy of being included in a collection of this genus. Flowering starts for most of them in late June or early July *A. anglicum*, botanically the most closely allied to *Napellus* and virtually our native aconitum, is the earliest and reaches a height of only a couple of feet but the tall *A. lycoctonum* with yellow or cream flowers has the longest flowering season throwing up shoots well into September. The most handsome is one for the back of the border *A. carmichaelii wilsonii* (or *A. wilsonii* to many nurserymen) and Barker's variety with amethyst blue flowers the most outstanding form.

Turning to the culinary and domestic herbs one is faced by a bewildering host of plants, some of them obscure, many of them evergreen and all of them dainty. *Mentha*, *allium*, *lavendula*, *hyssopus*, *chicorium*, *anthemis*, *borago*, *tanacetum*, *origanum* and *vinca*, one of the oldest known garden plants. The lavenders, some may argue, have no place in the border but they can make exciting pincushions of grey green growth when in full bloom. *Lavendula spicata* Grapenhall variety is the strongest growing and the darker more compact *L. nana atirpurpurea* also known under the name of Hidcote variety look superb interplanted with Loddon Pink, for perhaps lavenders are an example of

plants that depend more than most on their juxtaposition with one another. Tansy, *Tanacetum vulgare* should be introduced with discretion for it insinuated itself throughout the garden but for its old-world associations and its curious button-like yellow flowers it deems inclusion. Bee enthusiasts do well to let hyssop crouch at the front of the border and both the pink and white flowered forms come true from seed.

Not a border plant, but of supreme architectural beauty, and not easily forgotten once seen, especially in alpine meadows, is *Gentiana lutea* (why is it not included in the R.H.S. Dictionary?). The large tap root from which gentian bitters and gentian brandy are produced, delves straight down deeply as any who have tried to uproot a specimen knows, while the 4 ft. stem rises clothed with large linear leaves enfolding straw-coloured flowers in high summer. A striking and little grown plant which looks magnificent in groups planted in rough grass.

Plants I long to have

SOME OF THE PLANTS I long for may not even exist. I have never met anyone who has seen the double form of *Vinca minor alba*, and yet I feel there must be such a plant, perhaps growing in some old garden. I thought it would be the kind of plant the late Mr. Bowles would cherish but I could not find it among the many vincas growing in the garden at Myddleton House. Since my visit there a friend of his tells me that she knows he did not possess it in 1940, which was the last time she saw him. He told her than that he felt it must be growing somewhere and that he hoped to find it to complete his collection.

According to reference books there are two more periwinkles that we don't see to-day, a double form of a pink vinca, and a single brick red, but I do not think they are as likely to be in existence as the double white.

Is there a variegated bergenia, I wonder? Again, I have never seen one, nor do I know anyone who has, but I feel it may well exist somewhere. The late Clifford Whitley had a magnificent collection of variegated plants at the Paignton Zoo, but bergenia was not among them.

I have the white-flowered cup and saucer campanula, *Campanula persicifolia* and would love to find the blue. This I have seen but the tiny plant growing in an old garden in Dorset was never robust (and certainly not big enough to divide) and has since disappeared.

What has happened to the sky-blue double primrose raised by Hugh Buxton and known as Buxton's Blue? It was always scarce but I hope it has not disappeared completely. A few years ago the story came to me that quite a number of sky-blue double primroses had been sold in Dorchester market, but I was never able to track down anyone who had bought them or the source from which they came. For weeks after that I haunted the market and scoured the district to find growers of double primroses, but never found anything that pointed to a clue.

Has anyone a double green primrose, I wonder? A few people grow the form in which the double flowers are composed of sepals, but the one I am looking for is a true double flower. The single green primrose sometimes has an extra petal or two when first it opens but it soon reverts to its single state and my hopes are dashed again.

Margery Fish

Hardy Perennials for Show

WENDY V. CARLILE

If one lived to be a hundred one would never really get to the point where one could say whether a hardy plant is going to be out on a certain date, or not. The weather, the moisture content of the soil and the amount of sun, all make the period from bud to open flower vary so much.

However, to start at the beginning, when planting, most things appreciate a little well rotted manure. I am not in favour of a lot of fertilizers, I find that very good results are obtained with hardy plants from very little manure.

Planting in autumn or spring is better left to your own experience. No hard and fast rules can be made about this, only to say that pyrethrums, irises and scabiosas should be planted as soon as we get some wet weather in July, August or September.

Always cut your flowers first thing in the morning, unless they are very wet. Remove the lower leaves and split the stems up a little way with a knife, rather than hammering. With lupins and delphiniums and other flowers of this type, do not cut until the blooms are well out, otherwise you will find the tips bending over sadly when in water. With the sunflower family, side shoots are better removed, then all the water is taken up by the main bloom.

After cutting all flowers want a good long drink in a deep bucket or other receptacle, before being packed. Show blooms are best wrapped fairly firmly in newspaper. This keeps them straight and, once the stems are full of water, they remain this way. Some may prefer to pack their flowers in flat boxes. If you do this, do not put too many in, for if they are squashed they never quite recover their former beauty and, on the other hand, if only

a few blooms are put in a large box they roll about and get bruised. I find the method of rolling them in paper quite satisfactory and they are definitely easier to carry on a 'bus or train. When carrying your flowers always hold them at the bottom—and I mean the very bottom—firmly and downwards. This does not damage the blooms and they are far less likely to get caught in something.

If you are in doubt when picking scabiosas, the centre florets should be in tight bud when cut, if the blooms have to last any time. Once they are open, although that is the perfection of the flower, they start to wither shortly after. Keep cutting your side shoots of achilleas for really prize winning heads. With hemerocallis remember that each bloom only lasts for one day, so cut them with plenty of buds. A paper bag tied over a paeony will often hold it back for as much as a week.

Several plants cut better, and show better the second year, and last far longer in water, such as heliopsis, helianthus and echinaceas.

Always plant up single pieces of Michaelmas daisies. This way one has a really good head of flowers, instead of half a dozen indifferent ones. Pull them to pieces in the spring, when they are only a few inches high. Stake in plenty of time before the stems grow too high and, if we are lucky enough to have a good rain about May or June, cultivate the soil well and then, give a good mulch of lawn mowings. This will retain the moisture in the ground over a long period, they do not want to be starved of moisture as this often causes stunted growth or mal-shaped flowers.

Much the same applies to phloxes. These are gross feeders and, within

reason, the more food they are given the bigger head will result. Sir John Falstaff and Sandringham are two which are often prominent among the prize-winning blooms.

Now for a few varieties of these plants, which I think are good for exhibition.

Achillea Gold Plate, *Aconitum bicolor*, *A. bicolor* Sparke's Variety, *Anthemis* Grallagh Gold and Wargrave Variety, *Artemisia lactiflora*, plant this in a moist cool place for the best results. *Aster novi-belgii* varieties: Picture, the best tall crimson, Fellowship, Blue Radiance, very large blue flower, new, and Mistress Quickly. *Aster amellus* varieties: Mauve Beauty, Mrs. Ralph Wood, Empress. *Campanula lactiflora* Loddon Anna.

Chrysanthemum maximum Thomas Killan. *Echinacea* (Rudbeckia) The King. *Erigeron* varieties: Dignity, Felicity, Vanity, Charity. *Gypsophila* Flamingo. *Heliopsis magnifica incomparabilis*. *Kniphofia galpinii* September flowering, *K. thunbergii* varieties: Samuel's Sensation and Little Elf. *Monarda* (plant freshly each year for good sized blooms) varieties: Adam, Beauty of Cobham. *Pyrethrums* varieties: Brenda, Silver Challenger, Scarlet Glow. *Salvia haematodes*, *S. haematodes argentea*. *Scabiosa* varieties: A. E. Whitaker, Loddon White. *Solidago* Golden Mosa. *Sidalcea* varieties: Mrs. Garraway William Smith. *Thalictrum* Hewitt's Double. *Verbena bonariensis* not quite hardy in all parts of the country.

The Grafting of Herbaceous Material

INTERESTING WORK is being carried out in the Department of Botany at Manchester University under the direction of Professor S. C. Harland on the grafting of herbaceous material and a new method is being tried which, as yet, is known as the polythene tube method. The broad principle is to fit together stock and scion and protect the union with a $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch length of translucent polythene tubing to keep the material firmly in position. A diagonal cut is made $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ in. above the cotyledon and below the first node on the plumule of the seedling stock and a corresponding cut made on the scion. The union is then enclosed in the tube, the seed pans watered and covered with polythene sheeting. Shading is necessary during sunny weather, the sheeting is turned when necessary to prevent condensation and auxiliary shoots removed from the stock if and when they appear. Ten to twelve days later the union is established and the tubing



The polythene tubes fixed in position over a graft of annual *Lathyrus* onto the perennial *L. montanus*.

can be slipped off or cut away. Thus the time from seed sowing to the accomplished graft is as short as three weeks.

Most of the work at Manchester is being carried out with annual lathyrus, godetia, lupinus and fuchsia but Miss Holt who is conducting the experiments says that she has had success with *Lathyrus montanus* by this method and that she is trying other perennials and does not anticipate any difficulties provided that the stem of the scion is of comparable diameter with that of the stock.

K.N.S.

Obituaries

FRANK KINGDON-WARD

The unexpected death occurred on April 8th last of one of the best known plant collectors, Frank Kingdon-Ward, O.B.E., V.M.H. Probably, he is remembered best for his introduction of meconopsis species, the most outstanding of which was *Meconopsis betonicifolia*, sometimes erroneously called *Meconopsis bayleyi*. His books and articles will remain a source of pleasure to hardy plant lovers and many of the lilies, gentians and primulas he introduced, living reminders of his enthusiasm.

CHARLES DEBNAM

It is with regret that we announce the death of Mr. Charles Debnam who died on Monday, May 19, 1958. He was 74 years of age. Mr. Debnam was managing director and founder of The Astolat Organisation at Peasmarsh, Guildford. After starting the fencing business in 1920; he started three years later, Astolet Nurseries Ltd. His chief love and interest were in irises and delphiniums and recently hemerocallis.

COVER

Acidanthera bicolor murielae is a hardy bulbous plant with fragrant flowers of the natural order Iridaceae. Its introduction into this country is discussed in Miss Christine Kelway's article on page 28.

BOOK REVIEW

The Modern Florilegium

G. S. Thomas

(Sunningdale Nurseries 3/-)

THIS publication although from a nurseryman is not just another catalogue, in fact *The Modern Florilegium* compiled by Mr. G. S. Thomas is a miniature hardy plant hand-book to be studied again and again.

No hardy plant enthusiast could fail to gain useful knowledge and ideas from the helpful information given about the various plants. Not only are heights of plants given but also the distance each should be planted, e.g. *Gunnera manicata* 6 ft. × 6 ft., *Salvia superba* 3 ft. × 18 in., and *Stachys macrantha superba* 2 ft. × 9 in. and so on. For those that hanker after common or popular names they are included also *Saxifraga umbrosa* 'London Pride', 'St. Patrick's Cabbage', *Dicentra spectabilis* has three popular names, its fourth being gracefully worked into the text. The work is well cross-referenced and the Natural Order is given after the genus. It is illustrated by 23 photographs. Lists of grasses and ferns are included, two groups of plants frequently overlooked. Mr. Thomas is to be congratulated on this excellent hand-book.

N.J.P.

From the Post

Sir,

I would be grateful if you could kindly give me a source, private or otherwise from which I could obtain these plants: *Caltha palustris* Tydemans Variety, *Lathrea clandestina* and *Helleborus orientalis* Ballards Black.

DR. T. H. B. BEDFORD,
Leeds, Yorks.

THE BULLETIN

THE current issue of the Bulletin is the fifth and having established ourselves we feel that it is the fifth step towards success and therefore we are numbering the pages consecutively with the fourth issue. We hope to present two more issues before the end of 1958, thus completing Vol. 1, and to publish an index for the seven issues at Christmas. The editorial committee would like to include a page or two in each copy on the work, opinions or difficulties of members and previous requests for information about members has brought but a meagre handful of letters. Is this apathy or satisfaction? In our eight hundred odd gardens there must be interesting plants and keen gardeners, so please do write and tell us about them. Letters should be addressed to the Hon. Secretary or to me, and we are eager to know what the members want. This is not *our* shop-window, but the instrument of the society which aims to put all members in touch with one another. Also if anyone has photographs, of hardy plants, suitable for reproduction and would be willing to lend them we would be pleased to know.

HON. EDITOR.

HAWTHORN COTTAGE
BLIND LANE, BOURNE END
BUCKS.

CHANGES IN PLANT NAMES

OLD NAME	PRESENT NAME
<i>Achillea eupatorium</i>	<i>Achillea filipendulina</i>
<i>Aethiopappus pulcherrimus</i>	<i>Centaurea pulcherrima</i>
<i>Arum dracunculus</i>	<i>Dracunculus vulgaris</i>
<i>Betonica grandiflora</i>	<i>Stachys macrantha</i>
<i>Bupthalmum condiforium</i>	<i>Bupthalmum speciosum</i>
<i>Chelone torreyi</i>	<i>Penstemon barbatus</i>
<i>Megasea cordifolia</i>	<i>Bergenia cordifolia</i>
<i>Nepeta wilsonii</i>	<i>Dracocephalum wilsonii</i>
<i>Physostegia virginiana</i>	<i>Dracocephalum virginicum</i>
<i>Poterium canadense</i>	<i>Sanguisorbia canadensis</i>
<i>Saxifraga cordifolia</i>	<i>Bergenia cordifolia</i>
<i>Scabiosa pterocephala</i>	<i>Pterocephalus parnassi</i>
<i>Senecio wilsonianus</i>	<i>Ligularia wilsoniana</i>
<i>Telekia speciosa</i>	<i>Bupthalmum speciosum</i>

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AUGUST 27th—29th

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