

E. JOURNAL

OLD COTTAGE GARDENS/

BEST GARDENS

The flower of the Madonna

By R. W. Sidwell

The Madonna Lily (*Lilium candidum*) can fairly claim to be the oldest cultivated decorative plant in the Western world; it seems to have been grown by the earliest civilisations of the Eastern Mediterranean and was probably brought to England by the Romans.

The term "decorative" must not, however, be taken too literally for, like so many other early cultivated plants, it was credited with healing powers. As late as the mid-18th century we find the following recommendations for its use:—

"The roots contain the greatest Virtue; they are excellent mixed in Pultices, to apply to Swellings. The Flowers possess the same Virtue also, being emollient and good against Pain." It is also recorded that the plant was used to treat corns.

The name "Madonna Lily" is a late-19th century appellation. It was long spoken of as *Lilium album*, the White Lily. For centuries it was accepted as a symbol of purity. Medieval paintings show maidens holding the flower as evidence of their virginity.

Today there can be no flower more worthy of the name "cottage garden flower" than the Madonna Lily. It is seen at its best on the high lime clays of the Cotswolds and the Lower Lias belt. Fashionable gardens grow the modern hybrid lilies but none of them surpasses this oldest cultivated species in sheer beauty.

But this is not the only lily grown in gardens before 1700. Parkinson lists some eight or nine species, with several variations of some of them. The Martagon Lily, or Turk's Cap, grows wild in some of the southern counties of England, but this is probably



The Madonna Lily — copied with due reverence from a drawing by Leonardo da Vinci, c. 1479.

the result of escaping from cultivation. It has certainly been grown in England for many centuries.

Many relatives of the Turk's Cap, with their characteristic turned-back perianth, have been known from early times. Parkinson's *Lilium rubrum byzantinum*, the Red Martagon of Constantinople, is the lily we now call *L. Chalcedonicum*. In the 17th century it seems to have been very common but is much less so today. It is still possible to purchase bulbs of the true species. *Lilium pomponium*, the Early Red Martagon, is like a small version of the last-mentioned species. It is native to the Maritime Alps and was in cultivation in Britain by the nearly 17th century but is now rarely seen and is not easy to obtain. It was probably never very common in gardens.

Lilium pyrenaicum, another species that has become naturalised in parts of Britain, is a tough, rather nasty-smelling lily. As our ancestors attached much value to scent it has never enjoyed the popularity of the more sweetly-scented

lilies but it has survived and is still found as a cottage garden plant.

A surprising name in Parkinson's list is that of the Canadian Martagon, *L. canadense*. Surprising, that is, when we think of garden plants of this period as coming from Europe, Asia and North Africa. *L. canadense* was one of the first North American plants to reach Europe, having been brought to France in 1535 and to England by 1620 if not earlier. As Parkinson's "Paradisi" was published in 1629 it was probably one of his most recent acquisitions. However, it can never have been a common plant in ordinary gardens.

The same cannot be said of the Orange Lily with its erect flowers in a compressed raceme, almost amounting to an umbel. This is *Lilium aureum* of Parkinson and has since been variously called *L. aurantiacum*, *L. croceum* and is now correctly known as *L. bulbiferum croceum*. It is a variable species about which botanists have disagreed as far as nomenclature is concerned. The various forms are found wild in Eastern, Central and Southern Europe. It probably ranks next to the Madonna Lily as a candidate for inclusion in our list. Nevertheless, it is not easy to obtain the true species today. Most of the lilies of this group, with the erect flowers, have Japanese blood in them. They are a little grander than the European species, but not necessarily of sounder constitution.

An aura of grandeur always seems to have surrounded the lily. It has never been a commonplace plant. This is as true today as ever it was. They have often been called the "aristocrats of our gardens." Among the great mass of modern garden plants no plant is more deserving of this title than the Madonna Lily itself.

A quartet of laurels

The name "laurel" has been applied to a dozen or more leathery-leaved evergreens, usually with some qualifying adjective.

The true laurel of the ancients is the plant we call sweet bay. This still has the botanical name of *Laurus nobilis* and over the centuries has been called "bay laurel," "noble laurel" or just "laurel."

The bay was introduced to Britain before 1562. It is native to Southern Europe. Its tolerance of town conditions and its capacity to endure root restriction has led to its cultivation as a tub plant used especially at hotel entrances, where the tubs also function as receptacles for cigarette ends and toffee papers. But give the bay its freedom on a good stiff clay loam and it is a very different tree. Three to four feet of growth in a year has been noted.

Bay leaves are still used in cookery and, with the present trend towards the wider use of herbs, appreciation has risen considerably. In fact the bay has almost reached the position of a status symbol. A well-grown bay probably ranks above the latest dish-washer and a little below colour television.

Although there is no doubt that the crowns placed on the heads of

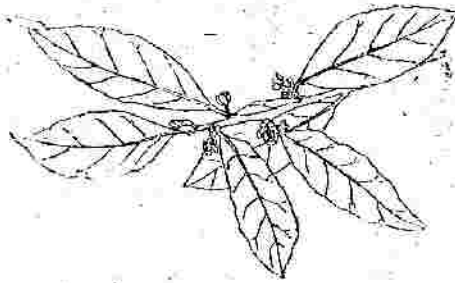
bay, the nomenclature of the ancient writers was often confused. Maxwell T. Masters, one of the leading 19th century gardeners/botanists, states that in the *Rimuccini Manuscripts of Dioscorides*, which at that time were still in the Philippines collection at Middle Hall, the name *daphne* is used for the noble laurel.

The *daphnes* are, of course, plants of a very different family but one of them, *Daphne laureola*, the spurge laurel, is a native of Britain and countries north of the Mediterranean. It is not uncommon in British woodlands, especially those on the Mas clay. Some people will remember the name from the *Bridle play* which gave Edith Evans a nice fat part.

The spurge laurel is poisonous and, along with its relative *mézerion*, was once in the British Pharmacopoeia. Its main use was as a vesicant and counter-irritant but it was sometimes chewed to relieve toothache.

Its tolerance to shade has made the spurge laurel a useful plant for under trees and it has long been cultivated in such situations. It has slightly scented green flowers.

By R. W. Sidwell



Laurus nobilis, the sweet bay.

readily taken by greenfinches.

The plant we know as the laurel today is the cherry laurel, *prunus laurocerasus*. This is a native of Eastern Europe and Britain in the early 17th century. Its large glossy leaves and rapid growth made it a valuable addition to gardens where a tall screen was needed. It is still unequalled for this purpose today.

There are numerous

local geographical forms of the cherry laurel and some have been given varietal names. Other variants have been raised from seeds and we have thus considerable variation in leaf and habit of growth. The dwarf form, "Otto Luyken," is very much in favour at the present time as a ground-cover shrub.

Our final laurel is the Portugal laurel, *prunus lusitanica*. Should it not be "Portuguese laurel?" We have Spanish chestnut, French hollyhuckle but Portugal Laurel. This useful evergreen was an introduction from Spain and Portugal in the mid-17th century. It is little less

Evergreens of this type probably reached their peak of fashion in the 19th century and suffered an eclipse in the first half of the present century. At the present time there is some degree of recovery of popularity, with the great interest in amenity planting by public authorities. An attractive variegated form of the Portugal laurel exists. It should be much more widely planted, as it is among the best of variegated evergreens.

OLD COTTAGE GARDEN FLOWERS: 3

Buttercups and daisies

By R. W. Sidwell

Some garden plants are native, some exotic—I use the word "exotic" in its original sense as meaning "coming from abroad."

For two centuries or more it meant just that to gardeners and it was an everyday word with them. It eventually came to be applied especially to hot-house plants from tropical countries. Now, of course, it is a vogue word used to describe something a bit special. Such is the debasement of our language.

Many early garden plants were selections made over centuries by patient cultivators of common native plants. Some of these selections may have originated in other European countries where the plant was also native, but, as far as we are concerned, they were derived from our native plants.

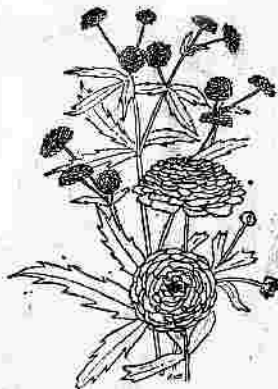
One of the commonest characters sought by the early plant developers was that of doubling. In most plants, doubling is brought about by the stamens being converted into petals. This is the doubling we know in the rose and carnation. With daisies the doubling is due to the short corollas of the disc florets being enlarged to resemble those of the ray florets. This is the doubling we know in the chrysanthemum.

Double forms of many common plants were produced over the centuries and there was much discussion as to whether doubles could be produced by cultural manipulations. Bogus claims to do so were common. In fact the only way to achieve doubling was to watch carefully for a tendency towards petaloid stamens and save seed from such plants.

The common field daisy (*Bellis perennis*) produced double forms some centuries ago and it became a common, and probably commonplace, plant in Tudor times. It would have been one of the most frequently used plants in knot gardens.

The double daisy has stayed with us through the centuries. Its status has not risen but its value has not diminished, as anyone who has seen the use of modern strains in The Old Garden at Hidcote will appreciate.

Several native buttercups have produced double forms which have considerable garden merit. The



Fair Maids of France (top) and Turban Ranunculus.

double field buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*) is still found in gardens where such things are appreciated. The creeping buttercup (*R. repens*) however, is too rampant a weed to be tolerated in most gardens even in its double form. The best of the double native buttercups is derived from *R. bulbosus*. This is a charming little plant and strictly non-invasive. It is probable that all of the above double forms were in English gardens before 1700.

The little white-flowered European species, *R. acrifolius*, has produced one of the most attractive of all double flowers: the tightly packed petals form a regular little button of a flower rather like a pom-pom dahlia. This is said to have been brought over by Huguenot settlers in the 16th century. The popular name "Fair Maids of France" seems particularly appropriate. I regard it as one of the most attractive flowers I grow.

But if we seek glamour amongst the buttercups we must turn to *R. asiaticus*. This is the flower of which the dry roots, looking like clusters of withered fingers, can be bought from garden shops. They are much less common now than even a few years ago. This plant came from the Levant in 1596 and the various forms have been known as Turkey, Persian or Turban Ranunculus. When it reached England it had already some centuries of cultural "improvement" behind it. It had already been doubled.

During the 17th century the ranunculus progressed rapidly and it rose to the rank of a major florist's flower, only exceeded in

importance by the carnation, tulip and possibly the hyacinth.

Gardeners of the 18th century gave it VIP treatment. There are recommendations for the complete removal of the top two feet of soil and replacing it with special compost in order to meet the exacting needs of this flower. Philip Miller, in the middle of the century, gives elaborate instructions for covering with mats to protect from heavy rain or the heat of the sun.

By the end of that century, specialist growers were offering many named varieties. Loudon, writing in 1824, tells us that in 1792 a grower named Maddock listed over 800 varieties. This grower claimed that there were more varieties of ranunculus than of any other flower. Named varieties were propagated vegetatively and Maddock observed that a variety would last 20 to 25 years. In all probability the degeneration was due to virus.

It is recorded that 140 named varieties were exhibited at the Cambridge Florists Society, in 1875. About 20 different classes, based on colour and markings, were found in the schedules of the leading shows in the 19th century.

In a flower root list of 1837, Flanagan and Nutting, of Mansion House Street, London, offered choice named varieties at £2.10s per 100. Other less select strains were progressively cheaper until we reach the bottom at 6s. per 100. Decidedly "un-ordinary." And it is probably "un-ordinary" that our present strains would appear if we could compare them with the select forms of 150 years ago.

The colours in this ranunculus are brilliant. Today they go from white through pink to crimson, and from yellow through orange to scarlet. In former days, grey, purple and coffee-coloured forms were described.

By the end of the 19th century the popularity of the flower was waning. Even annual lifting and replanting did not prevent degeneration of stocks. Interest shifted to other plants as fashions changed.

For a time in this century, the ranunculus had some popularity as a commercial cut flower, grown, as anemones are grown, often under cloches.

The daffodils

By R. W. Sidwell

The family Amaryllidaceae is distinguished among petaloid Monocotyledons by having six stamens and, typically, an inferior ovary; the flowers are borne on leafless scapes, and are usually regular.

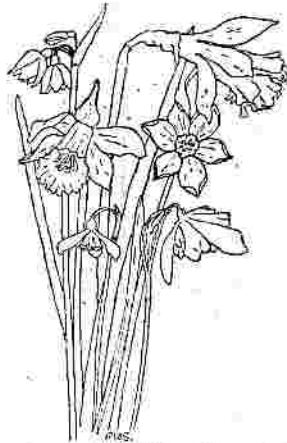
This little snippet of botanical taxonomy provides as good an excuse as any for bringing daffodils, snowdrops and snowflakes together in this series on old cottage garden flowers.

The genus *narcissus*, to which the daffodil belongs, is almost wholly confined to Europe, North Africa and Western Asia, although some species are found as far away as Japan. The great majority of the species are concentrated in the Mediterranean countries and would thus have been available to the oldest civilisations of that area. Hybrids seem to have arisen naturally some centuries ago.

In Britain we have two native species — the ordinary common wild daffodil, *N. pseudo-narcissus*, and the Tenby daffodil, *N. ovalaris*. The latter is distinguished by its paler colour and its distinctly six-lobed trumpet. Naturalised in many places and included in our flora for at least a century is *N. biflorus*, the Primrose Peewee. This is a short cup type, usually with two flowers on a stem. It is thought to be a hybrid between *N. poeticus* and the common daffodil.

The earliest cultivated daffodils in Britain were therefore part native and part introduced. By the late 16th century many varieties were in cultivation and more than 70 varieties were listed by Parkinson in 1629. The bunch flowered types had much of the blood of *N. tazetta* in them. The poeticus types were in Britain by Parkinson's time but it is doubtful if those early forms exist here today. The so-called Old Pheasant Eye of cottage gardens is *N. recurvus*, introduced in the early 19th century.

The chief parent of the trumpet daffodils is *N. hispanicus*, which seems to have been in Britain by 1576. This a larger plant in all respects than our



native daffodil. The old double daffodil, Van Sion, or *N. telemonicus plenus*, was first recorded in 1620 and is still with us. However, most of our present-day varieties are of recent introduction for the narcissus has been the subject of intensive breeding during this century. Most of the original species are nevertheless to be found in the collections of specialists.

The common snowdrop, *Galanthus nivalis*, is doubtfully native but it has been naturalised in many parts of the Severn Valley for centuries and must have been cultivated from early times. Parkinson called it *Leucojum bulbosum* — the bulbous violet. The name a little later in the 17th "snowdrop" came into use. It is unlikely that any of the plants mentioned by Shakespeare are intended to refer to this flower.

The snowdrops are mostly native of Southern Europe and Asia Minor. There are many local variations of the common snowdrop and, in addition to these, about a dozen or so distinct species are known, some with a very limited natural range of distribution. Most of these were introduced into the gardens of Britain in the 19th century. Snowdrops today are something of a cult. Specialist growers are at great pains to point out the subtle differences between the related forms.

In Parkinson's time the genus *leucojum* included both snowdrops and snowflakes. Today it is restricted to the latter. The position is, however, com-

plicated by the use of the name "leucojum" for the stock gilliflower, the plant we now call just "stock." It is difficult to understand how such widely differing plants came to receive the same name.

The commonest of the snowflakes is *L. aestivum*, known as the summer snowflake but actually flowering in the late spring. This is occasionally found wild in south-east England and is considered otherwise it is found indigenous in that area, central and southern Europe. This plant is at home on moist, heavy clays and has always been a garden plant. Few people regard it as rather a wild seem to have been interested in breeding improved forms although there is a variety with slightly larger flowers known as Gravetye var. It presumably originated at William Robinson's garden at Gravetye Manor.

The spring snowflake, *L. vernum*, has been with us for centuries but has never become common and is now rarely seen. This flowers with the snowdrops and is much more "snowdrop like" than the coarser summer snowflake.

Still rarer is the autumn

flowering snowflake, *L. autumnale*. This was in cultivation in Britain in the early 17th century. It is native of the Iberian peninsula and North Africa and is not fully hardy in Britain. The delicate pink flowers are produced in September/October and are followed immediately by the leaves. It has always been a plant for the specialist.

Old cottage garden flowers

The lobelias

By R. W. Sidwell

It is perhaps stretching the definition of old cottage garden plants to include the lobelias. This is not because they were not in cultivation in Britain in early times — several species were grown in the 17th century — but because they were probably confined to the physic gardens rather than the ordinary gardens of the time.

There are two native species of lobelia. One, *L. dortmanna*, is found in the Lake District where it grows in shallow water with its flowering stems rising above water level. I remember first finding it some 40 years ago. The other, much rarer, is *L. urens* which is a worthy occupant of the modern bog garden, although rarely seen. Neither of these species can be regarded as being of importance in our gardens at any time and it is the introductions from abroad that made the genus important to gardeners.

Lobelia cardinalis appears to have been the first arrival. I can now picture readers visualising the familiar tall, red-leaved lobelia so popular with discerning plantmen. I must hasten to change the picture. The red-leaved lobelias are later introductions. Some may have a bit of *cardinalis* blood in them but the chief parent is *L. fulgens*, which came from Mexico around 1810. We will return to the true *L. cardinalis*. This is a green-leaved plant, a little shorter than the red-leaved hybrids and flowering a little earlier. The flowers are somewhat smaller. Although it is now a comparatively rare plant in cultivation, it is in many ways a better plant than the popular forms. In the first place it is much hardier, for its native home is North America where it almost reaches the Canadian border. A second point of importance is that it grows stiffly upright without staking.

There seems to be some dispute as to when *L. cardinalis* was introduced to Britain. Some authorities say that it was introduced by John Tradescant the

Younger in 1637. This was on his first visit to North America. There is, however, no doubt in the present writer's mind that the "*Trachelium Americanum* sin *Cardinalis* plants" of Parkinson is this plant. This puts its introduction back before 1629 and those authorities who give 1626 as the date of its introduction would seem to be the more accurate.

A little later, around 1665, came *L. syphilitica*. This again is a fairly hardy plant and one that seeds itself readily when once introduced. The typical form has blue flowers but white forms frequently crop up on the strains I have seen. The specific name "*syphilitica*" comes from a supposed use for the cure of syphilis. An idea gained currency that it was used by the American Indians for this purpose. Critical studies, however, failed to confirm its value.

The lobelias are all more or less poisonous, some very much so. One species, *L. inflata*, also from North America, was at one time in the British Pharmacopoeia. It has properties akin to nicotine.

The little blue bedding lobelia came from South Africa in 1752. With the rise of Victorian formal bedding in the 19th century, this lobelia won a place which it has held up to the present day. The original plant was a sprawling perennial and compact forms were produced by careful selection. The trailing lobelia still has its uses for hanging baskets and vases.

The wide distribution of the genus is illustrated by *L. tenuior* from Western Australia. This is a blue-flowered species, occasionally seen as a pot plant. It has flowers of about twice the size of the bedding lobelia, on erect growing plants about nine inches high. It is one of the most attractive members of the genus and deserves to be more widely grown.

One of the most poisonous of the lobelias, and very much a plant of the botanical gardens, is *L. tupa*. This is a tall species from Chile, reaching six feet or more in height.

The other gilliflowers

By R. W. Sidwell

In an earlier article I stated that from around the 15th century to the 18th century the gilloflower or gilliflower was the carnation. I also stated that the name, with qualifying adjectives, was also applied to several other plants. It is now time to consider these.

First, the Queen's Gilliflower which we know today as Sweet Rocket (*Hesperis matronalis*) and which has also been known as Dame's Violet. This plant is native to Central and Eastern Europe and Asia north of the Himalayas but it has been so long cultivated that it has become naturalised in many other places. For this reason it has been included in most British floras for at least a century.

Although it must have been widely grown in the 16th century, it does not appear to have been mentioned by Shakespeare but this author did not venture very far afield in the plant world and is often more noteworthy for the plants he omits than for those he includes.

A double form of the Sweet Rocket is said to have been brought over by Huguenot refugees in the late 16th century and double forms were widely grown for the next three centuries but, as they were sterile, they had to be propagated from cuttings. Double rockets were still to be found until a few years ago but I do not know where they can be obtained today. Their constitution became so weak that it was difficult to keep them alive.

The Stock Gilliflower is the plant we now call 'Stock', with such qualifications as 'Ten-Week' or 'Brompton'. They are derived from *Matthiola incana*, a native of Southern Europe and naturalised on parts of the south coast of Britain. In the wild, and in the Brompton form, it

is a short-lived woody perennial but the modern strains are mostly annuals.

Double forms were in cultivation by the 16th century but, unlike so many other doubles flowers, they could be propagated from seed. The actual double stocks are quite sterile and produce no seed but it was found that certain strains of singles produced 50 per cent doubles and these were justly prized. The reason for this behaviour is a simple genetical one which we will not go into in detail. By making use of less simple genetical processes, modern breeders have been able to produce 100 per cent double stocks, but this is a 20th century development.

The delicious perfume of the stock has endeared it to centuries of gardeners. The older shrubby forms must have been common cottage garden flowers for many years. The herbalists found a use for the flowers and in the mid-18th century we read that an ointment made by boiling them in hog's lard is excellent for sore nipples.

Oddly enough, the name *Leucojum album* persisted in herbals for the 'White Stock July Flower' for centuries. There is no doubt that this is the plant we are now considering. Today, of course, the genus *leucojum* is that of the snowflakes, relatives of the snowdrops and daffodils.

I have left until last the plant we now call the Gilliflower. This is the Wallflower (*Cheiranthus cheiri*). In earlier days it was the Wall Gilliflower. Scent is once again a feature of note, as with all the gilliflowers.

Double wallflowers appeared by the early 17th century and possibly earlier. They are mentioned by Parkinson in 1629. It is almost certain that these doubles would have been valued, as were the double forms of stocks, but the plant behaved differently genetically. Although strains producing some doubles from seed were



On the left a double wallflower (Harpur Crewe); right, Sweet Rocket and, centre, double stocks.

known, the best forms had to be prepared from cuttings.

As the centuries passed, improved strains of singles appeared and the doubles slowly passed into the

background. Late in the 19th century the Rev. Harpur Crewe saved from extinction a little double wallflower of excellent constitution and of a bright yellow colour. This is still with us and is one of my most treasured plants. It is a sub-shrubby perennial which gets a bit straggly after about three years but is easily propagated from cuttings. Its peak flowering period is in the spring but, in fact, it is seldom without flowers and today — December 20 — still has a few flowers on it.

For some years I struggled with another old double variety, Bloody Warrior, but this proved to be of such poor constitution that it was difficult to keep it alive, let alone get it to flower. I doubt if it now exists.

In the 1920s, seed of Double German Wallflowers could still be bought but the strains were poor and the singles eventually replaced them completely. They are the most popular of spring bedding plants.

OLD COTTAGE GARDEN FLOWERS

A variety of perfumes

By R. W. Sidwell

For many centuries perfume has been appreciated by man. Before the days of bottled perfumes, bought over the shop counter, plant flowers and foliage provided the chief source of such pleasures.

The name "herb" came to be applied to plants whose leaves or stems (less frequently other parts) had uses for flavouring, for medicine or just for smelling nice. The latter group, which were called aromatic, or strewing herbs, are the subject of this article in the series.

Many of these plants were shrubby rather than herbaceous and were therefore not herbs in the botanical sense. But herbs they were to those who used them.

The lavender probably occupies top place among perfumed plants. Some people have claimed, without convincing evidence, that this plant was in England in Roman times. Other authorities give 1568 as the earliest authentic record. It is, however, almost certain that it was here before that date. It is probably native to the Mediterranean, but it may have come from farther east. Although there is some evidence of occasional medicinal use for soothing troubled stomachs, it is as the source of oil of lavender for perfumery that it is best known and is still grown on a large scale commercially for this purpose.

Lavender hedges were a feature of Tudor gardens and many gardens since. Lavender was used to form the knots of knot gardens along with hyssop, cotton lavender and other things before box finally took over in the 17th century.

A plant whose foliage emits less of a perfume and more of a smell is the cotton lavender, *Santoline chamaecyparissus*. This makes a close textured grey hedge when closely clipped and such clippings would have been used for strewing

in time past. If left unclipped it bears its yellow, button-like flowers in untidy profusion. I like it better this way, but in 16th century gardens it would doubtless have been trimly managed and flower-less. It is often so treated in modern herb gardens and it still ranks as one of the best dwarf hedges if properly managed.

The smell of cotton lavender is fresh but not "sweet." It is not so strong as to be overbearing which is more than one can say for rue, *Ruta graveolens*. Seldom can this specific epithet have been more aptly applied. Opinions differ as to how unpleasant smelling rue is. Some people like it. Others think it offensive. Others say that they can enjoy it in mild doses at a distance.

For many years it was used to ward off the plague. The philosophy behind this was simple. What one is unaware of does not exist. Plague and pestilence were associated with evil

smelling, unsanitary conditions. Hide the smell and the danger goes. What better than rue for doing this?

Today rue is a very attractive blue-grey foliage plant, much used in modern shrub plantings. No other dwarf evergreen shrub combines such attractive colour with such distinctive form of foliage and the plant is very much "in" at the present time.

The artemesias contain plants of varying aromas and considerable beauty of foliage. Southernwood, or old man, *Artemisia abrotanum* has a most pleasant smelling foliage, and was used for strewing and for placing in linen drawers along with lavender and other such things.

A little less sweet is wormwood, *A. absinthium*. This is the absinthe used for flavouring the drink of that name.

The common name derives from its extensive use against internal roundworm and threadworm parasites of man. The active ingredient is a substance called santonin and it was long included in the British Pharmacopoeia for this purpose. The commercial product was obtained from a closely related species collected in Turkestan and parts of India. It is dangerous if used in excess. It has often been suggested that absinthe has harmful effects not connected with its alcohol content. Perhaps there is some truth in this.

We now use wormwood for its attractive silver grey foliage. Some years ago Margery Fish selected a very good form which she



From the left: Lavender, Rue and Wormwood.

named "Lambrook Silver." This is the form most commonly met with in modern nurseries.

For delicate sweetness of perfume that is different, sweet cecily is high on the list. The Latin name *Myrrhis odorata* is appropriate. Although sometimes called myrrh is it not the myrrh of the Bible.

Sweet cecily is an umbellifer, related to the common hedge parsley, but it is a bolder plant with beautiful filigree foliage and large umbels of white flowers. It is a native plant, found on the western side of Britain, and it has a long history of cultivation. In past times it was often eaten raw in salads. For my part I prefer its smell to its taste. There is a large group at Hidcote, effectively naturalised in the area known as Weston-birt.

The hellebores

By R. W. Sidwell

For centuries there has been confusion over the nomenclature of the plants popularly known as "hellibores" — there are two quite distinct groups of plants to which the name has been applied.

One of these is related to the lily, the other to the buttercup. It is the latter group that is best-known today. We will, however, take the liliaceous hellebores first. These belong to the genus *veratrum*.

Veratrum album is native to Europe and Asia and was introduced to Britain by about 1548. It was the source of hellebore powder, used as an insecticide into the present century. The plant is highly poisonous but the poisonous prop-

erties of hellebore powder quickly disappear after it is applied, so that food plants may be eaten a day or two later.

V. nigrum is found in Southern Europe and Asia and was grown in Britain by the late 16th century. Although having similar properties to the above, it does not appear to have been used to the same extent as an economic plant.

V. viride is found wild in North America and appears to have been used for centuries by the native Indians as a sedative. It was at one time official in the British and United States Pharmacopoeias. The popular names of white, black and green hellebores, applied respectively to the above three species, are, of course, translations of the Latin and refer to the colour of the flowers.

The *veratrum*s are tall stately plants, four to six feet high, not showy in the popular sense, but of increasing interest today, when plant form is appreciated as much as is blatant colour.

The true Hellebores belong to the genus *helleborus*. Two species, *H. foetidus*, the bearsfoot, and *H. viridis*, the green hellebore, are found wild in Britain but some authorities consider them to have been introduced at an early date. *H. niger*, the black helle-



bore or Christmas Rose came to Britain from Southern Europe in the 16th century.

Like the *veratrum*s, the true hellebores are very poisonous and they have found a place in medicine as powerful purgatives. They are, however, dangerous plants to experiment with and their medicinal use hardly survived the 19th century.

As with the *veratrum*s, the present interest in form rather than colour has led
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to a great increase in appreciation of the hellebores. They are vogue plants and the best forms are much sought after by connoisseurs.

For many years the most popular species was *H. niger*, whose flowers, by the way, are white, not black. Some fine forms of this exist. Unfortunately the flowers are easily damaged by bad weather unless given some protection. For this reason the taller *H. orientalis*, with flowers ranging from white to purple, usually with green shading, is a more useful garden plant.

The most brilliant greens found in flowers may be seen in the hellebores. *H. viridis* is among the best but *cyclophyllus*, *argutifolius* and *lividus* are also of great beauty.

Hybrids, both natural and man-made, abound in this genus and many new introductions have been made during the last century.

The hellebores, therefore, are all plants that were originally grown for medicinal purposes but have now won a firm place as decorative plants.

The hyacinths

By R. W Sidwell

Spring flowering bulbs have been popular garden plants from earliest times.

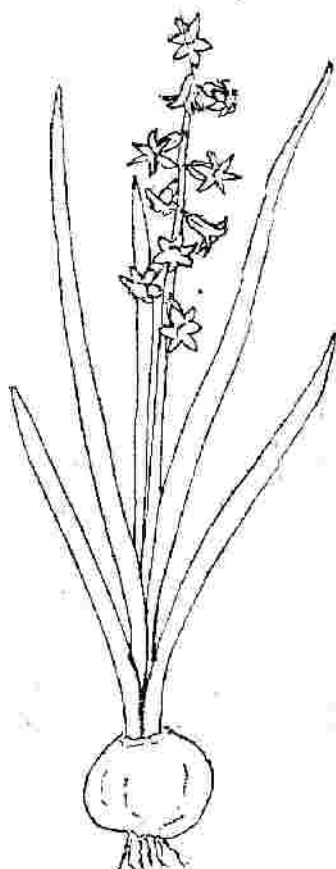
The Mediterranean countries are particularly rich in wild species and many of these would have been cultivated by the early civilisations of the area.

Hyacinthus orientalis, the parent of our garden hyacinth, is a native of Asia Minor, the Balkan Peninsula and neighbouring countries. The earliest record of cultivation in the West is in the botanical garden of Padua around the mid-16th century but it was certainly cultivated in Turkey before that date. It seems to have been well-known in Holland a few years later and may have reached England as early as 1561. It was certainly well-known to English gardeners by the end of the 16th century.

The earliest colours seem to have been white, pink and blue. The creamy yellow form is said to have come from Russia much later. The wild form is no longer in cultivation, which is rather surprising considering how much interest there is in wild species. Many collectors have worked in Turkey in recent years and a great number of wild bulbous plants have been introduced. It is possible that it was always rare in the wild but I have not obtained confirmation of this.

As with other bulbous plants, the main centre for development was Holland. Double forms were produced by 1613.

Over the next century or so, the hyacinth got heavier and sturdier until it



Hyacinthus orientalis, of the early 17th century.

became that most inelegant plant we have today. Nevertheless, the perfume was always a redeeming feature and for planting parterres and formal gardens few spring flowers could equal it.

Although the hyacinth was never the subject of speculation as was the tulip, it had its moments, and in the 18th century prices reached as much as £200 per bulb.

The discovery that it was the most suitable of all bulbs for forcing into early flower added a new interest. During the 18th cen-

tury the greenhouse evolved, and interest in bulb-forcing increased steadily, right up to the present century. Hyacinths became a popular bulb for the cottage window and the novelty of growing them in specially-designed glasses filled with water was an additional interest.

The doubles lost favour with the passing of years and today the preference is decidedly with the singles.

Not all of the hyacinths of the early writers were *H. orientalis*. The plume, or feather hyacinth, then known as *H. comosus*, but which we now call *Muscari comosum*, was in English gardens by the end of the 16th century. This is remarkable for the tuft of sterile flowers at the top of the raceme. In the form *monstrosum*, all of the flowers are sterile and are replaced by purple feathery plumes. Other species of *Muscari* were also known as hyacinths in the 16th and 17th centuries.

The common English bluebell was at one time put in the genus *hyacinthus*. It was later moved to the *scillas* before finding its present place in the genus *endymion*.

A close relative of our bluebell is *Endymion* (or *Scilla*), *hispanicus*, the Spanish bluebell. This is larger than the common bluebell with wider, open flowers. Several colour variants are known in the blue, pink and white range but they are not far removed from the wild type. Its introduction to English gardens dates from about 1683.

It is interesting to ponder over what makes a plant the subject of inten-

sive breeding and selection. The common hyacinth was changed almost out of recognition when compared with the wild type. Yet the Spanish bluebell remains much as it was. Was there original genetic instability in the hyacinth? Or was it just an accident that enabled the hyacinth to capture the imagination of the early plant selectors? Time and time again, when we examine the origins of our garden plants, we find that enormous efforts are put into breeding from a certain species while other very similar species are neglected. There seems no logical explanation.

Old cottage garden flowers

Gilloflowers

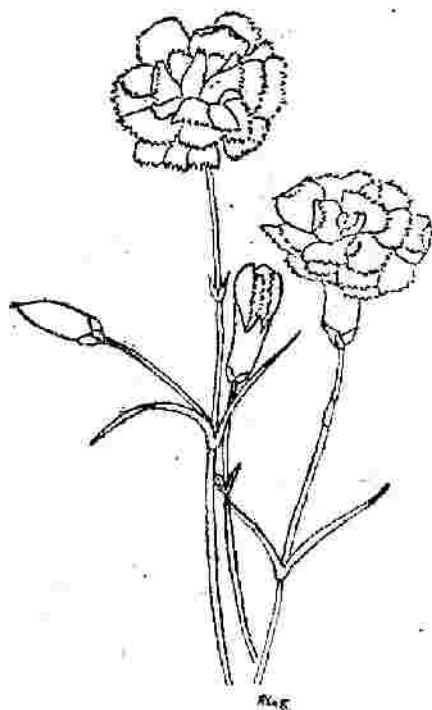
By R. W. Sidwell

The carnation, or gilloflower, was the supreme flower of early post-medieval times and the unchallenged queen of our gardens for two centuries or more—but its origins lay much farther back.

The wild *Dianthus carvophyllus* is still found in the South of France. It has a simple five-petalled flower of a pinkish mauve colour and, of course, a delicious perfume. Its cultivation is probably as old as the early Mediterranean civilisation. It was certainly grown by the Romans at the beginning of the Christian era.

There is a story that the wild form was introduced to Britain by the Normans, either by accident or intention, and that it became naturalised around some of the Norman castles. It is reputed to have been found growing at Rochester Castle as recently as 1874, but whether this can be accepted as proof of continued occupation for 800 years is open to question. The cultivated forms certainly arrived much later but they seem to have been here by the mid-14th century. Chaucer's "clove gillofre" was undoubtedly this flower.

The origin of the name, which has been variously spelt gillyflower, gilloflower, gillyvore, gely floure, jullyflower, julyflower and so



Carnations, from a drawing of the mid-17th century.

on, has been disputed. It has been popularly supposed that it is a corruption of the last-mentioned name, for July is the peak month of flowering, but scholars favour an original through the French "girofle," the clove. The spicy, clove-like scent has always been noted by writers.

The name "gilloflower" came also to be applied to other flowers of somewhat similar scent. The stock was "the Stock gilloflower," the sweet rocket (*Hesperis*) was "the Queen's gilloflower," and the wallflower "the Wall gilloflower." In terms of scent, the last name seems the least appropriate, yet this is the plant to which the name gillyflower has been exclusively applied in

recent times. The above names are from Parkinson's "Paradisi" (1629).

The cultivated varieties of the carnations came from various European countries, especially Holland, Germany and France. Nicholas Lete, a prominent London merchant trading with various European countries and the Levant, is credited with introducing the first yellow carnation to Britain. This was grown by Gerard in the late 16th century.

Before that, we have an indication of the esteem in which the carnation was held. The famous painting of Anne of Cleves, which is said to have misled Henry VIII, shows the princess with a posy of carnations. Might she not, with equal justification have been called Anne of Cloves?

By the end of the 17th century, about 360 varieties, mostly from Flanders and the Netherlands, were in cultivation. We now see the various types emerging and being placed in distinct groups. There were selfs (flowers of one colour), flakes (white or yellow with darker feathering), bizarres (pale ground colour with markings of two or more colours) and picotees (white or yellow with clearly defined marginal markings).

The wild form of carnation had notched or toothed outer margins to the petals. During the 18th century this character was

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slowly eliminated, to produce smooth-edged petals. This character was developed to the full in the 19th century when raisers took great pride in the perfectly flat flower with regular overlapping petals slightly concave near the margin. This was the perfect border carnation. The colour range extended from soft greys to purple, from pale pink to the richest crimson. There were yellows and apricots and a great variety of colour combinations. The delicacy and subtlety of some of the colouring has hardly ever been approached by any other flower. But high breeding had weakened their constitution and the border carnation had now become an indoor plant, cosseted like a delicate child, in order to produce blooms of perfect show quality.

It was at this time that a new development overtook the carnation. There occurred in France a new race with a repeat flowering habit. Some authorities think that the original may have been in existence as early as 1750, but 1830 is accepted as the date of introduction of the first of this new race. It was characterised by a different habit of growth which was bushy or "tree-like." It has been suggested that it may have resulted from a cross with the Chinese Pink *Dianthus Chinensis*.

This new type was imported into America in 1852 and after further breeding work, became known as the American or Tree carnation. This is the perpetual carnation of today. It is the carnation of the florists' shops and wedding buttonholes. It is never out of flower. It is a factory-produced commercial flower, grown to perfection by specialists.

But let us return to the border carnation. After 1850 it suffered a decline, but by the late 19th century there was renewed interest. James Douglas, and later Montague Allwood, did much to re-establish the plant as an outdoor flower and by the 1920s it was again in favour with specialist nurseries, catering for a substantial demand. Since the second world war, popularity has declined sharply and this exquisite flower that once dominated the summer flower shows is now rarely seen in gardens.

The pink, based on the wild *Dianthus plumarius*, has always been the poor relation of the carnation. During the present century we have seen it used in crossing with various types of carnations to produce new strains of excellent garden plants. To some extent they made good the loss of the border carnation proper, but they can never match it in colour range, perfection of form or sheer aristocratic excellence.

Old cottage garden flowers

Monkshood, the poisonous beauty

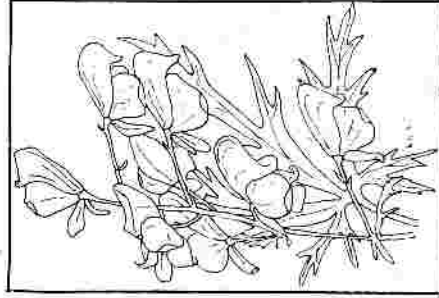
By R. W. Sidwell

The common European monkshood (*Aconitum napellus*) is a rare British native, being occasionally found in the West of England — whether it was introduced here by man's agency or whether it is a true native is uncertain, but it has been cultivated from very early times and could well be an escape.

It is an imposing plant, four to five feet high, with flowers of such a rich blue that it must have attracted the attention of gardeners at a time when mid-to late summer flowers were few. Nevertheless, beautiful though it is, it was probably for other reasons that it first attained the status of a cultivated plant. It is one of the most poisonous of plants and has had medicinal uses until comparatively recently. The tuberous root is said to

have been eaten by mistake from time to time, with fatal results. Mistake for what I cannot think, as it could hardly have been mistaken for any root we eat today. But then, in those far-off days people ate skirrets and rampion and other obscure things. In fact any plant with fleshy underground organs was in danger of being sampled as food.

Medicinally it was used as a pain killer, both for internal and external use.



Monkshood

but its internal use was so fraught with danger that it became restricted to external applications to relieve rheumatism and such-like pains — presumably with success, but still not wholly safe.

The name wolfsbane comes from its use to poison meat baits for wolves, a practice not uncommon in parts of Europe. The name monkshood is an allusion to the hooded upper sepal.

The monkshood has remained a popular cottage garden flower through the centuries. Gerard and Parkinson wrote of it in glowing terms, usually with some allusion to its poisonous properties. It is still included in modern herbals though, fortunately, there are no recipes for its use in those I have seen. It is catalogued by nurserymen selling hardy herbaceous plants. Most gardeners who grow it seem unaware

that it is poisonous. And after all, who is likely to eat it?

I regard it as one of my best plants and of interest as a study in interdependence among wildlife. At one time the tops of the plants were devoured before flowering time by caterpillars of the golden plusia moth. After feeding they produced the most beautiful cocoons under the lower leaves, from which the moths duly emerged. I was reluctant to spray the plants and for a time put up with the damage. The house sparrow feeds its young on aphids and young caterpillars and after a few years they discovered the plusia caterpillars and removed them nearly all. This has now gone on for some years. Each year the caterpillars hatch out and start feeding. Before they have done much damage the sparrows remove them. Some must escape because moths again lay eggs next year. At the moment we seem to have struck a perfect balance. I have my monkshoods, the sparrows have their baby food and the moth somehow survives.

Aconitum napellus is a very variable species and some of its forms are spread through temperate Asia. At least one of these is even more poisonous than the typical *A. napellus* and it is the chief source of the drug where this is still used. The yellow flowered monkshoods are another variable group based on *A. lycocotum*. Once again we have closely related forms spread from Western Europe to Eastern Asia. The European forms have

been in cultivation at least from the early 18th century.

At the end of the 19th century and early 20th century, when botanical explorations in Asia, especially China, were at their peak, many other

species of monkshood were introduced. Some of them have been used in breeding and a few useful garden hybrids now exist. Notable among these is a relatively dwarf form *Bressingham Sprite*. Although the last two

centuries have brought us the chrysanthemum, dahlia, Michaelmas daisy and the weller of North American herbaceous perennials, the common monkshood still holds its own among these late summer flowering plants.

Old cottage garden flowers

By R. W. Sidwell

Since writing some rather critical articles about the plant content of certain gardens which claim to be historically accurate replicas of some three or four hundred years ago, the question has been put to me: "What sort of plants would have been grown in these gardens?", and, as a supplementary question: "Are they still available?"

To the first question, the answer is a long one which we will attempt to answer during the coming months.

To the second, the answer is a qualified "yes." The qualification is that some old garden forms have been lost but the species and very similar forms are still mostly with us.

To elaborate my criticisms, I would mention Kirby Hall in Northamptonshire where much emphasis is placed on the accuracy with which the original 17th century garden has been re-created. There is no doubt that the paths, and probably hedges, are in their original position. But is that enough? Similar criticisms can be made of the knot gardens at Stratford-upon-Avon and Hampton Court. The answer one gets is that it is not claimed that the planting is historically accurate—only the garden. As if the plants did not constitute the garden or were merely supplementary to it.

I will not pursue this theme further but will, before starting to talk about these old flowers, refer to some which were certainly not available. I have set a boundary line at the year 1700.

First, the rose. In addition to the native species, there were several species of hybrid origin, probably raised in France, and also some Asian species, in cultivation in Britain by the 16th century, but they were a long way from the modern rose. In fact, little rose-breeding was done until the 19th century when the French breeders took the rose seriously in hand. English breeders did very little for the rose until the present century. How strange that we should think of the rose as an especially English flower. Even the old shrub roses, so fashionable today, are not very old. Few antedate 1800. With a plant that has advanced so rapidly, 50 years is a long time and roses of that age qualify as "old garden roses."

The sweet pea is another modern creation. The wild form was in Britain by the beginning of the 18th century but it was little more than a botanical garden specimen until 1870, and the modern sweet pea is a 20th century product.

The gladiolus was long cultivated in Mexico, its native country. It reached Europe in the late 18th century and England at the beginning of the 19th. Progress was rapid and it soon became one of our most important garden plants.

The chrysanthemum arrived here from China at the beginning of the 19th century. By the middle of the century, numerous varieties had arrived and in 1861 the large flowered varieties came from Japan, hence the name "Japanese chrysanthemum" long used for the large flowered class. In China they

had been cultivated for two to three thousand years, in Japan for well over 1,500 years. The plant is so deeply ingrained into our daily lives today that it is difficult to believe it is so recent an introduction to Britain.

The fuchsia, whose home is Central and South America, is a 19th century introduction to Britain and, like the gladiolus, quickly became popular as it responded to the attentions of the plant breeder.

The pelargoniums, including the popular bedding "geranium," arrived from South Africa mostly in the 18th century but little work was done on them before the 19th century. They proved to

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Cottage gardens

be the supreme plant for formal Victorian bedding and have deservedly retained this position up to the present time.

The tuberous begonia was unknown in Europe until after the middle of the 19th century, when it was introduced from South America, and the first hybrids were raised shortly after. The first introduction was in 1870. All the pioneer work on this plant was done in Britain and, in a remarkably short space of time, the modern tuberous begonia was created.

Hardly any of our present-day summer bedding plants were in cultivation before 1700. *Begonia semperflorens*, *calceolaria*, *verbena*, *agrostatum*, *helleborium*, *Phlox drummondii*, *petunia*, *Salvia splendens* and *zinnia*, all from Central or South America, had not yet reached us.

The hardy herbaceous perennials were also of much more limited range. Many of the Eastern North American species just missed our deadline of 1700. *Michaelmas daisy*, *Helianthus*, *Phlox paniculata*, all came from this region in the early 18th century and the perennial lupin came from the same place a century later.

China and Japan had not yet provided us with the great wealth of primulas, hostas, lilies etc., which we now accept as normal in our gardens. The first large flowered Clematis came from the Far East in the middle of the 18th century, along with many hundreds of flowering trees and shrubs, which are the mainstay of modern gardens.

So, with all these things absent, what have we left? Obviously gardens were different places in terms of sheer colour masses. This applied particularly to late summer and autumn. Yet there were plenty of plants of interest, as I hope to show in due course. Forbushes were raised much higher than they are today. Colours were softer and more subtle when compared with the ferocity of modern bedding plants. Somehow, the plants seemed to belong to a gentler age, hard though it may have been at times.

The double red paeony

By R. W. Sidwell

The double red paeony (*Paeonia officinalis*), still a common plant in cottage gardens, was introduced into Britain in the middle of the 16th century.

The single wild form is native to Southern Europe but the plant must have had a long history of cultivation in Mediterranean countries before it reached Britain. As I mentioned in an earlier article in this series, "doubling" was a character sought after by the earlier cultivators of ornamental plants. Double forms of many common plants, such as buttercups, daisies and poppies were known by Tudor times.

The evidence seems to indicate that the paeony of those days was just as large and just as fully double as the one we now know so well. This would probably make it the largest, and almost certainly the heaviest, flower grown in 16th century gardens.

The specific name "officinalis" indicates medicinal uses and we find references to this in the old herbals. These uses were, however, probably more imaginary than real, and by the mid-18th century much of the enthusiasm for it had worn off. The uses claimed for the paeony were curing hysteria or nervous disorders, and some other troubles peculiar to females. Some writers were at pains to point out that only the female paeony — the present species — was suitable for treating women. For men the male paeony (*Paeonia mascula*), an entirely different species, should be used.

As most of the family are more or less poisonous its use must have required some care, but most recipes included boiling the roots, which would have removed the acrid principle. In fact some paeony

species have been used as food after adequate boiling.

Another early arrival in Britain was *Paeonia peregrina* from the Balkans. This was in cultivation here in the early 17th century and is found in collections today, although not as cosmopolitan as the double red. A gem among paeony species is *P. tenifolia* with globular scarlet/crimson flowers and delicate filigree foliage. This was introduced from south-east Europe in 1765 but has never been a common plant. I have struggled for 30 years to build up a stock of this plant, yet the demands of friends keep me at the minimal level. But its exchange value is high.

Most of the present-day varieties of herbaceous paeonies are derived from *P. lactiflora*. This is native to a broad belt of country from Persia to Mongolia and Siberia. Early introductions to Europe came via China, where many varieties were raised, but much of the later breeding had been done in Europe, including Britain. Its original introduction dates from 1784 but it is really quite a modern plant in its present garden forms.

The aristocrat of the paeonies is the moutan (*P. suffrutosa*), cultivated by the Chinese for many centuries before its introduction to Britain in 1787. The enormous flowers, often fully double, are a tribute to the skills of generations of plant breeders. At the end of the 19th century, two other tree paeonies were introduced from China, *P. delavayi* and *P. lutea*. These were wild species, untouched by the hands of plant breeders, and they have the unspoilt character of "natural" plants. Some French breeders crossed *P. lutes* with the moutan and produced that beautiful hybrid "Esperance" which visitors to Hidcote and Kiftsgate often admire.



Edging of knots

BY R. W. Sidwell

The choice of materials for edging the beds of Tudor knot gardens presented problems for the gardeners of that time.

The box — "the small, low or dwarf kind called French or Dutch Boxe" was not widely used until the end of the Tudor period. By the end of the 17th century it was used universally for edging paths and formal beds as it was in the 19th century revival of such fashions. But the early Tudor gardeners had not discovered it.

Parkinson, writing in the early 17th century, discusses the merits of "...the several materials wherewith these knots and trayles are set forth and bordered". These could be liv-

vation came with the 20th century interest in alpine plants.

Armeria caespitosa is one such gem. Growing about two inches high it is best kept in the alpine house or a very well drained scree.

Garden forms, supposedly improvements, have appeared from time to time. In some, such as

Bees Ruby, the heads have become so large and the long supporting flower stalks so weak that the plant flops about most untidily. I have even seen attempts to stake them and tie them up. When a thrift requires staking there is something wrong. Even Parkinson in his tidiest mood never had to face that.



Common thrift

ing or dead. Dead materials included "Leade, Boordes, Bones and Tyles" which were used for supporting raised ground. Herbs and large pebbles were used for edging knots or beds of the same level.

Of living materials most of those tried out in early times had defects. Lavender cotton, hyssop and germander all required frequent clipping and with this treatment were liable to be short lived. Juniper and yew were tried but they soon became too large. Marjoram and thyme spread too freely to maintain the neat, well-defined edge that the knots, in their most perfect development, called for.

For many years thrift was the material most favoured for edging these knots. The native thrift, *Armeria maritima*, was, and still is, common on our coasts and its neat trimness made it very suitable for this purpose. Its annual crop of flowers were also neatly carried and merely required trimming with sheers to remove the dead flower heads.

Nevertheless that plant had its faults, for as Parkinson says: "Yet these inconveniences doe accompany it: it will not only in a small time overgrow the knot or trayle in many places, by growing so thicke and bushie, that it will put out the forme of the knot in many places; but also much thereof will dye with the frosts and snows in Winter, and with the drought in Summer..." Thrift is, after all, a maritime plant and although it survives readily in gardens nowadays injury in severe winters is still not uncommon. And its habit of growing up into a mound makes it vulnerable in dry periods.

The common thrift has many relatives, very similar to itself. They are mostly natives of southern Europe and several are a little too tender to survive our coldest winters. Many are alpine species and their introduction to culti-

Old Cottage garden flowers

The gladiolus

By R. W. Sidwell

Gladioli as we know them today are derived from species native to South Africa and are almost wholly products of plant breeding over the century or so. There are, however, a number of species of European origin with a longer record of cultivation in Britain.

We have a native gladiolus *G. illyricus*, which is confined to a small area of Southern England and is struggling for survival. It is doubtful if it was ever common and may indeed have been introduced originally by man. In the older floras it was known as *G. communis* but the two species are now regarded as distinct. The true *G. communis* is thought to have been grown in England in Tudor times as it is mentioned by Gerard, as is *G. segetum*. Both are from Southern Europe. The nomenclature of the European gladiolus species is often confused in the early literature and we are not quite sure which species is represented by Parkinson's "*G. narbonensis*."

The species we can be quite sure about is *G. byzantinus* from the Eastern Mediterranean. From the time of its introduction in the early 17th century it became a popular and very successful garden plant, being mentioned by most of the early writers. This is taller than most of the European species, attaining a height of two feet or more. The flowers are small when compared with the modern

large flowered hybrids, and the colour, a purplish magenta in the most common forms, may not be quite as exciting as the rich and delicate range we associate with the gladiolus today; but in a cottage garden, among plants, of their own class they hold their own. In such places they can still be found.

In neglected gardens, and gardens totally abandoned, they often survive competition from the fiercest perennial weeds. Seedlings seem to flower in about three years and the plant naturalises readily on the lighter soils in warm sites. In fact it is better able to take care of itself than our native species. It flowers in early summer.

Some of the South African species were introduced quite early. Nomenclature is often confused but some species from this region were probably in cultivation before the end of the 17th century. By the middle of the 18th century the species *tristis*, *psittacinus* and *cuspidatus* had arrived and a little later *G. cardinalis*.

During the 19th century many more species came from the Cape and serious breeding began. The early flowering race, still grown under glass as a commercial but flower, dates from 1823 when a cross between *cardinalis* and *tristis* produced the hybrid *G.X. colvillii*. Later, the large flowered hybrids emerged. These were late summer flowerers.



Gladiolus Byzantinus.

G. primulinus was introduced from the Victoria Falls in 1904 although it had been known to botanists for 15 years or more. This led to the introduction of an entirely new race and provided the basis for the delicate salmon and apricot shades we have come to know so well.

The plant breeder has done much for the gladiolus but not without difficulties. Mr A. B. Kunderd, a most successful American breeder, ran into trouble from an unexpected quarter in the 1920s. His local church — I think it was in the State of Tennessee — considered that Kunderd was usurping the role of Creator in producing such new plants and he was excommunicated for interfering with the divine works of God.

OLD COTTAGE GARDEN FLOWERS

Bears' Ears

By R. W. Sidwell

The auricula is said to have been brought to England, as were so many other good things, by the Huguenot refugees about 1570.

It was *auricula ursi*, the Bears' Ear, in the older records, and has also been known as Dusty Miller from the mealy covering of the flowers and younger leaves. It is, of course, a primula.

Primula auricula itself is yellow flowered and has a natural distribution range extending from the Alps to the Carpathians. A related species *p. hirsuta* is found in the Pyrenees and the Alps. It is usually accepted that most of the auriculas of our gardens come from a natural hybrid between these two species. This has been given the name *primula pubescens*. As *primula hirsuta* has pink or mauve flowers it is thought that this is the source of the purples and mauves found in the modern garden auricula.

To begin with, the plant was not particularly impressive but the illustration in Gerard's Herbal of 1597 probably did it less than justice for even the wild form should have a better show than this.

During the 17th century the auricula gained prominence as a florist's flower. Breeders concentrated on perfection of form as well as increasing the colour range. By the end of that century the varieties ran into hundreds, including a white variety called Virgin's Milk. This latter had nothing to do with the old cosmetic of that name which seems to have been some sort of emulsified oil. Nevertheless, the auricula was not without claims of medicinal value, for it was said to prevent dizziness if eaten by mountaineers during ascent.

The 18th century saw further, though intermittent, progress and by the early 1800s its culture had reached a high level, especially in the north of England. Specialist societies sprang up and rigid standards were set for exhibition requirements.

By now, two main groups had emerged, the show auricula, probably derived mainly from *p. auricula* itself, and the Alpine or Border Auricula derived from *p. pubescens*. The former were of delicate constitution and, as the mealy covering was an important part of the show requirements, they were grown exclusively under glass. Vegetative reproduction was slow and prices

paid for select forms were very high.

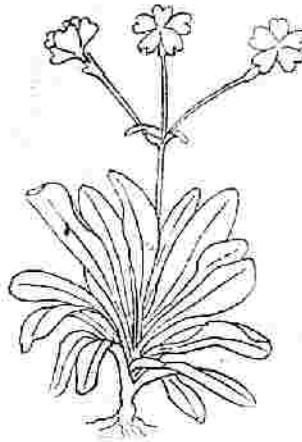
During the 19th century the show standards became clearly defined and remain so to this day within that exclusive circle of specialists. Some of these requirements are highly artificial, as are the comparable requirements of show rabbits, dogs or cage birds, but perfection is pursued with great fervour by those who have been bitten by the bug.

The truss must have an odd number of flowers. The corolla must have six lobes (the wild form has five; garden forms a dozen or more). The flowers must be "thrum eyed." "Pin eyes" are not acceptable. And so on.

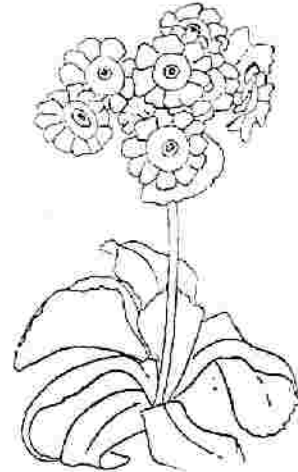
Those of us who have a liking for natural flowers may ridicule these artificial standards but no one who has seen a perfect show auricula can fail to be impressed. The green-edged auricula is of breath-taking loveliness and quite unique among flowers.

The ordinary outdoor alpine auricula is still seen in old gardens and is much loved by those who appreciate its subtle colouring. Old colour descriptions included mouse, willow and light tawny. I am sure we have all of these today and how peaceful they look, compared with the blatant orange and scarlet of the modern polyanthus. But auricula colours are not all pale. The rich velvety crimsons and purples are as intense as those of any flower.

Four hundred years of cultivation have not brought sensational change in the auricula, as has happened with some other flowers, and the present alpine auricula is one of the most typical cottage garden flowers.



Auricula ursi erubescens, bluish-coloured Bear's Ear, from Gerard's Herbal, 1579.



Auricula, from a mid-18th century painting.

Old cottage garden flowers

This is the original naked lady

By R. W. Sidwell

The meadow saffron (*Colchicum autumnale*) is one of several bulbous plants, flowering before they produce leaves, to which the name "naked ladies" has been applied — it was, however, the original recipient of that name and naked flowers certainly look as they push through bare ground in my garden at the end of this dry summer.

Once a common plant of moist meadows it is so poisonous to livestock that it has now been eliminated from pastures but it is not uncommon in Cotswold

woodlands and in such places presents few hazards to man and beast.

It is included in the early herbals and, along with its relative, *Colchicum byzantinum*, was grown by Parkinson in 1629.

It is sometimes wrongly called autumn crocus. There are some very fine crocus species flowering in the autumn, and also without leaves, but they are quite different plants and can be distinguished from *colchicum* by their three stamens. *Colchicum* has six. The leaves of *colchicum* are most un-crocus like. In *C. autumnale* they may be a foot long and an inch wide. In *C. byzantinum* they are even lar-

ger. As they push up in the spring they bring the seed pods up with them. It is these that are the danger to grazing cattle.

Like so many other plants of early cultivation, the meadow saffron was used medicinally and may still be so used to some extent. The active principle is the alkaloid colchicine. It seems to have been used as a remedy for gout for centuries.

A celebrated French nostrum for gout, called *Eau medicinale d'Husson*, owed its properties to colchicine. The drug is obtained from the corm and the seeds.

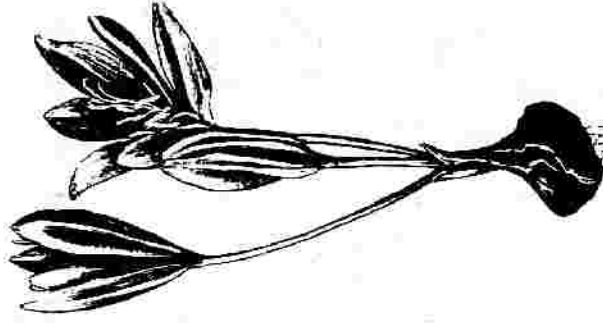
During the 1930s a new use was found for colchi-

cine. When plant cells divide in the normal process of growth each chromosome splits into two. The halves migrate to their respective poles and two daughter nuclei are formed, each with the normal chromosome complement. Plant tissues treated with colchicine fail to develop their separate nuclear membranes after the chromosomes split and the result is a nucleus with double the normal number of chromosomes. Such polyploids may have very desirable horticultural characteristics. For instance, a sterile hybrid may be rendered fertile by the simple doubling of the chromosome complement. This happened with Pri-

mula kewensis and *Digitalis mertonensis* without colchicine. But this is a long way away from the old cottage garden flower with which we started this article.

In addition to the two species mentioned there are many others, mostly spread over the Eastern Mediterranean countries as far as Persia. *C. Speciosum* was introduced to Britain in the mid 18th century and many others have followed since. Today we have some large flowered hybrid forms including double flowered varieties.

The predominant colour is lilac to pale rose but white varieties of several species are known. There



is a particularly fine white form of *C. speciosum*. Some of the new hybrids are quite deep in colour.

An odd man out among the meadow saffrons is *C. luteum*, which is spring flowering, has yellow flowers and comes from Northern India. It is rare in cultivation and probably also in the wild.

Chrysanthemums

By R. W. Sidwell

The chrysanthemum, so well known to all of us, cannot muster the slightest claim to being included in this series of articles.

Although its cultivation in China goes back to the time of Confucius, it was not until the end of the 18th century that it reached Britain. Even then, the range of size and form was limited and it was Robert Fortune, that greatest of plant collectors in the Far East, who sent the first large flowered types from Japan in 1861. Thus was created the "Jap" class of chrysanthemum which persisted in the shows until fairly recent times.

Modern cultural techniques have made the chrysanthemum an all - the - year - round flower

santhemum Peruvianum, the Golden Flower of Peru, was, in fact, the giant annual sunflower.

Getting away from the annuals there are other chrysanthemums with a long history of cultivation. The shrubby marguerite or Paris daisy (*C. frutescens*), a native of the Canaries, reached Britain via France by the end of the 17th century. It is said to have been cultivated by Marguerite de Valois who married Henry of Navarre in 1572. This appears to be the origin of the name "Marguerite" although

some authors think this name should be reserved for the native perennial species *C. leucanthemum*, the oxeye daisy.

The best known of the herbaceous perennial chrysanthemums, *C. maximum*, is quite modern, being introduced from the Pyrenees in 1816. Breeding of garden varieties of this species dates from the late 19th century.

We have left until last the chrysanthemum with the strongest claim for a place among old cottage garden flowers, *C. parthenium*, the feverfew, is

Continued on page 15.



and so much a part of our daily lives that it is difficult to realise that serious interest in the flower in the West goes back for only about a century and a half, following 2,000 years of Eastern skill.

Why, then, are we including the chrysanthemum in these articles? There are several members of the genus chrysanthemum which have been growing from much earlier times. The native corn marigold (*chrysanthemum sogetum*) was too showy a flower to have been overlooked and selected forms were cultivated. *C. coronarium*, another yellow flowered species, was introduced from the Mediterranean by the early 17th century. It was known as the corn marigold of Candy, Candy being an old name for Crete. This has finer flowers than the native species and double forms were recorded by the 18th century.

The finest of all these annual species, *C. carinatum*, came from Morocco in 1796. This was the parent of the well-known "tricolor" types of annual chrysanthemums grown today.

Not all the plants called "chrysanthemums" by the early writers were true chrysanthemums by modern botanical nomenclature. Parkinson's chry-

Continued from page 14.

possibly native but some authorities think it may have been introduced by the Romans. Its English name comes from its use as a febrifuge and it seems to have had uses similar to that of the Chamomile, with which it is sometimes confused.

The double form of feverfew seem to date from the early 17th century and it is interesting to note how much interest these plants attract even today. They seed down freely in my garden and I count them among my most useful plants. The golden feather, much used today as a bedding plant, is a form of feverfew although often miscalled pyrethrum.

The Amaranths

Old Cottage Garden Flowers

By R. W. Sidwell

The amaranth family includes a large number of nondescript plants, many of them annual weeds in the tropics, but a few have long ornamental the status of have sometimes been much prized.

The best-known, and possibly the first to be introduced, was Love Lies Bleeding (*Amaranthus caudatus*), which was certainly in Britain before the end of the 16th century. Its long pendulous tassels are distinct enough even among present-day plants. Three or four hundred years ago they must have seemed remarkable indeed. Although of tropical origin, it is hardy enough to be treated as a hardy annual in this country and this would have made its widespread cultivation a simple matter before the development of glass as an aid to growing the more tender species.

Closely related to Love Lies Bleeding and also of long cultivation is Prince's Feather (*A. hypochondriacus*), which makes a coarse plant with erect plumes of flowers. This

plant is also a hardy annual under English conditions.

The fortunes of both plants have wavered over the years. They have never captured the imagination of plant specialists, as have the more glamorous things such as carnations, tulips or auriculas, but they have had their moments. The Victorians were quite fond of them. Most noteworthy however, was the sudden rise to fame when the green form, rejected by past generations, was "discovered" by the modern flower arrangers during their revolt against the more colourful fashions of the past.

I find it puzzling to decide how important some of the other amaranths were before the end of the 17th century. A. tricolor, sometimes known as Joseph's Coat, is said by Alcie Coats to have been "much loved by the Elizabethans." Yet this is a very tender plant, rarely succeeding out of doors in this country, and I cannot think it was often seen before the 19th century. Gerard certainly writes of it with rapture but this must not be taken as proof of its common cultiva-

tion. Gerard had a habit of lifting bits of information direct from Continental authors. He often knew less about the plants than he would have his readers believe.

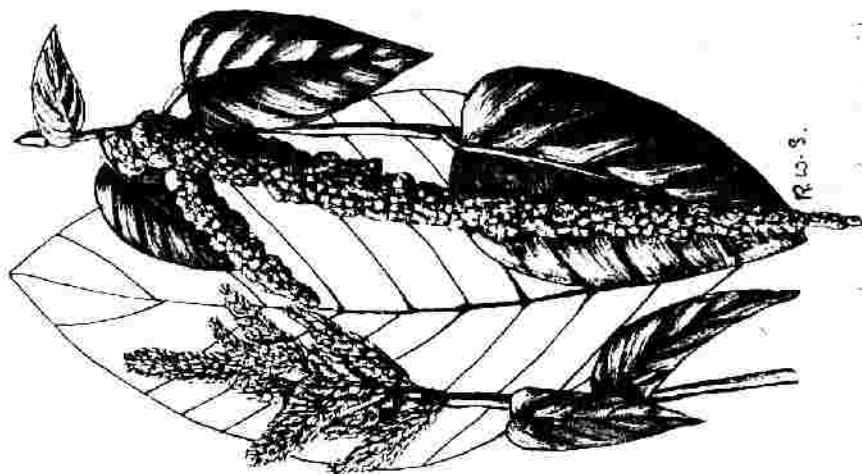
The cockscomb (*Celosia cristata*), another tender amaranth, was known in Britain before the end of the 18th century, but here again it is unlikely that it was commonly cultivated. This plant is interesting in that the cultivated, monstrous form was known to Western botanists before the wild form was discovered. We thus have the wild type being given as variety "pyramidalis" of the species *C. cristata*. Logically it should be the other way round.

It was in the 19th century that the cockscomb came into its own. The aim was to have the "comb" as large as possible with the fewest leaves and the stem so short as to be invisible. An article in "The Floral World and Garden Guide" for 1858 describes the method by which this is achieved. The young plants are grown sturdily until they show bloom. The best are then selected and the tops cut off

with five or six leaves. These are rooted in bottom heat and fed heavily when rooted. They are then potted on, whenever the roots reach the side of the pot. The result can be a "comb" a foot or more across on a plant no more than six or nine inches high.

A plant the Elizabethans would have loved if they had known it and been able to overwinter it, is alternanthera. This plant, with foliage in shades of yellow, red and purple, is almost the perfect thing for edging parterres and carpet bedding. What better plant could be found for Tudor knot gardens? But this Brazilian native did not reach us until the 19th century. It enjoyed considerable vogue in Victorian bedding schemes and is still in use in our parks departments.

An arrival from tropical Asia at the beginning of the 18th century was the Globe Amaranth (*Gomphrena Globosa*). This requires warm conditions and is never very happy out of doors in Britain. It is still to be found in gardens, but one of its main uses today is as an indicator plant in the study of virus diseases.



Prince's Feather and Love Lies Bleeding.

OLD COTTAGE GARDEN FLOWERS

A selection of common annuals

By R. W. Sidwell

Hitherto in this series we have dealt entirely with perennial plants; now although most of the present-day bedding annuals were still unknown in Europe in 1700 there were, nevertheless, quite a number of annuals commonly grown.

During the present century many perennials have come to be grown as annuals. The antirrhinum became naturalised in Britain on old walls and similar sites many centuries ago but it would have been regarded as the shrubby perennial which it is. Seed was a convenient means of carrying plants from place to place, but if a plant would survive for a number of years it would be left to do so. Propagation by cuttings would always be used in preference to seed if it were possible. In this article, we will, therefore, confine our attention to some plants which are true annuals and die after flowering.

Some of the annuals in Britain before 1700 were from the New World but

these will be the subject of a separate article. In this article we will confine our attention to plants originating in Europe and Western Asia.

The native cornfield poppy, *Papaver rhoeas*, is mentioned by Parkinson in 1629 and was, no doubt, cultivated for its bright splash of colour but it was not until the late 19th century that the Shirley strain was developed by the Rev W. Wilks, Secretary to the Society. The annual poppy most favoured by the early gardeners was the opium poppy, *P. Somniferum*. This was of greater importance as an economic plant than an ornamental one and was cultivated by the ancient Mediterranean civilisations both for its opium and poppy seed oil.

Poppy seed oil was an important and highly esteemed edible oil. It was also used as a burning oil and for some manufacturing processes. Good samples of seed contain 50 per cent oil. Before the days of mineral oils vegetable oils were of great importance in the economy. The poor Montgomery re-

flected this when he wrote: "Who loves not Autumn's joyous round, Where corn and wine and oil abound?"

As for opium, this was much used as a pain killer. The alcoholic tincture, known as laudanum, helped to relieve the suffering of many a poor family in the early 19th century. Addiction was common. It is not often realised that poppy heads for the production of laudanum were a commercial crop at Evesham 150 years ago. Pitt records a field of two to three acres at Norton on September 6, 1805. The crop was "sold to the druggists".

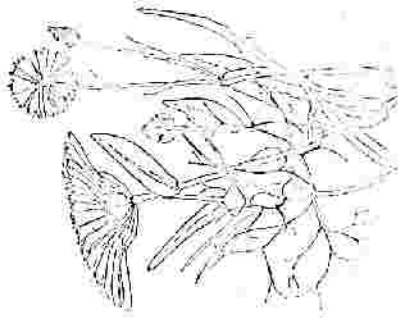
This may seem a long way from old cottage garden flowers but we still grow the opium poppy today. In fact, once introduced it seeds so freely that it is difficult to eradicate. The writer's garden always produces its quota of self sown plants. The opium content has not been determined. It is probably low.

Most lupin species, including the common perennial lupin, are natives of America and are comparatively recent introductions.

and has remained a popular annual through four centuries. The plant is somewhat poisonous and related species have occasionally been used in medicine. It is thought that the black cummin mentioned in Isaiah XXVIII, 25.27 is the seed of a species of *Nigella*.

In the late 19th century that famous gardener Gertrude Jekyll selected a particularly fine form which still bears her name today. The annual cornflower, *Centura cyanus*, is a native plant which was at one time a common cornfield weed. It had become rare before the days of modern herbicides. Now it must be nearly extinct. It has, however, been a popular garden plant from early times and selected forms are widely grown today. It figures prominently in old botanical illustrations.

Calendula officinalis, the pot marigold, is usually thought to be the "many buds" of Shakespeare. The corn marigold could, however, be a candidate for this honour. The RHS Dictionary gives 1573 as the earliest proven date for the introduction of the calen-



Marigold, cornflower, seed head of love-in-a-mist.

tion. Two annual species were commonly grown, *Lupinus lutea* with yellow flowers and *L. Hirsutus* with blue, purple or white flowers. The latter is the "biew lupin" of Evelyn. Both of these species are native to Southern Europe. Both are also grown as fodder crops and the seeds were sometimes eaten.

Nigella damascena, Love-in-a-Mist or Devil-in-a-Bush, was introduced into English gardens by 1570

dula into Britain but there seems evidence that it was here much earlier. The flowers were used as a substitute for saffron in cooking and confections. The true saffron is from the dried stigmas of the saffron crocus and it would be very expensive when compared with that derived from marigold flowers. It seems likely that the marigold had culinary uses beyond that of the saffron which is little more than a yellow dye. As with some of the above annuals, the *calendula* is still popular today. Nothing in the garden gives a more generous display of intense orange. Overbearing, many people would say.

The annual candytuft became popular by the 17th century and is still so today. In the year 1700 the sweet scented pea, *Lathyrus odoratus* came from Sicily. Two centuries later it was to give rise to the sweet pea, most popular of annuals in the 20th century and the only true annual that has a specialist society to look after its interests.

Best gardens : 1



Huntingdon Elm Avenue



The Still Garden

Hidcote, one man's creation

R. W. SIDWELL begins a new series of interest to all who love a fine garden.

WHEN a wealthy American army officer purchases a Cotswold manor house, what can we expect? All sorts of possibilities suggest themselves.

Major Lawrence Johnston purchased Hidcote Barrim Manor in 1905 and during the next 35 years developed it in a way that made it almost unique among British gardens.

Like all gardens, Hidcote suffered from some measure of neglect during the Second World War and when,

in 1948, a joint committee was set up by the Royal Horticultural Society and the National Trust to preserve gardens of outstanding merit Hidcote was the first garden to be presented to the committee. It is now owned and managed solely by the National Trust.

Hidcote grew up during the period of revolt against formal Victorian bedding, indeed it was the period of revolt against formal gardening in general. The plea for natural planting which William Robinson had done

so much to sponsor in the late 19th century was having its effect. The enormous increase in plant importations from abroad, especially from the Himalayas and Western China provided a wealth of new material especially suited to this new naturalistic style. Maier, Wilson, Forrest, Farrer and others had given much of their time and, in some cases, their lives to enrich our gardens with plants from this uniquely rich source.

Lawrence Johnston made good use of their work and plants from the Far East, naturally planted, are a feature of Hidcote. And yet there is a contradiction in the way Hidcote was conceived.

The area is exposed to cold winds. Shelter of some sort was necessary. In-

stead of choosing informal shelter belts, as some would have done, he chose to plant formal hedges, mostly of hornbeam and yew. But his love of severe formality is even more strongly illustrated by the Pillar Garden of clipped yews and the rectangular hornbeam boxes of the Still Garden.

V Sackville West, whose own garden at Sissinghurst was and still is one of the gems of British gardens, once described Hidcote as a series of cottage gardens.

This is a fair description, for the ten acre site consists of units or compartments each with a character of its own. To some degree the same can be said of Sissinghurst and one wonders whether or not Sissinghurst owes something to Hidcote influence, for it was started a quarter of a century later.

Although most sections of Hidcote are in some measure constrained by formality of layout, yet the planting within each section is informal in the extreme and this is what gives the garden its unique character.

Only in the Stream Garden and in the southern end of the garden known as "Westonbirt," where emphasis is on autumn colour, do we find true informality. Here hedges are in evidence only as distant boundaries.

The maintenance of a garden such as Hidcote has its problems. A garden is not like a picture which, with a bit of cleaning up, will remain as the artist created it indefinitely. A garden consists of living things which grow. Trees get bigger and have an effect on the plants beneath them. A planting scheme suitable for the early years may be unsuitable later. A garden continually evolves. Some plants must be considered as temporary fillers and these will disappear as

the more permanent things get bigger.

When taking over a garden such as Hidcote, which was the creation of one man, it is essential that the spirit of the place should be maintained. One has to put oneself in the place of the creator and try to do what he would have done. It would be very easy to run Hidcote on modern labour-saving lines, cutting out a job here and a few falls there, but the effect would not be what Lawrence Johnston would have wished. It is a great tribute to the National Trust that they have succeeded so well in retaining the Lawrence Johnston spirit.

During recent years a programme of hedge splitting has been in progress to restore them to reasonable proportions. Shrubs are carefully pruned to keep them within bounds and to preserve the "hidness" that is inseparable from the true Hidcote. As a result it is apparent to even the most casual visitor that it is one of the best-managed gardens in the Midlands.

It is, however, plants that make a garden. Lawrence Johnston was a plantsman. It is a characteristic of Hidcote that not only are many plants grown there but that they are grown extremely well. *Meconopsis Sheldonii* around the edges of the

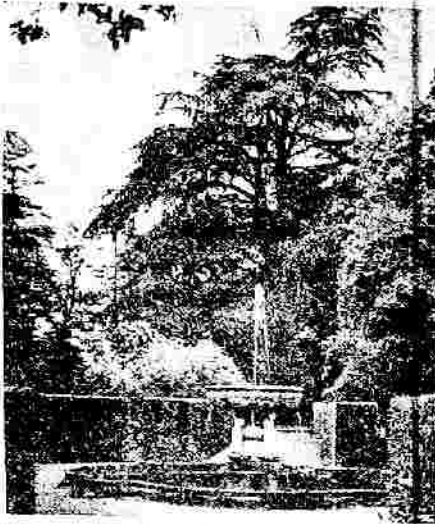
Bothay Pool Garden are breathtaking when seen for the first time. A visit in early June is worth while for these alone. Walls are covered with climbers of interest and rarity. *Schlenkeria hydrangoides*, a hydrangea relative, is seen in the Courtyard, as is also *Magnolia delavayi*, the huge leaves of which add dignity to the sheltered corners, as they do in many other of the "best gardens."

There is a large collection of shrub roses, many clematis, some fine paeonies, and many hydrangeas, especially the wild, latecrop types. In the spring the hellebores provide character to the woodland floor and in the autumn colchicums seem to grow better than anywhere else I know. At this time one can also detect that delightful burnt sugar aroma of the dying leaves of *Cerillaphyllum japonicum*. A complete list of plant species and varieties would run into thousands.

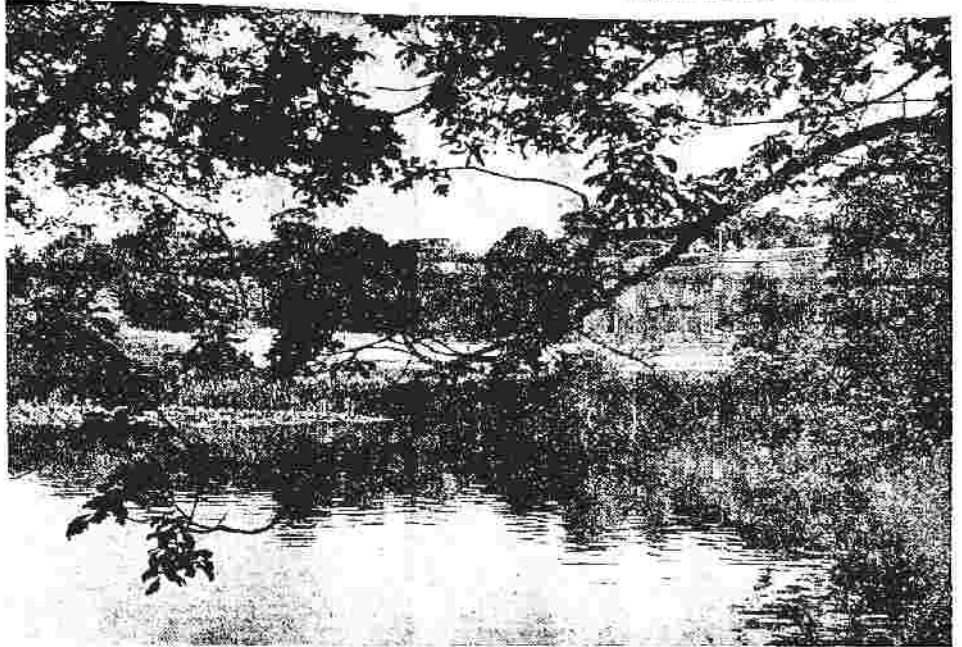
There is little point in cataloguing. Mention should however, be made of the fine avenue of Huntingdon Elms and also of those original occupants of the garden, the Cedar of Lebanon and the beeches.

The garden is open daily from the beginning of April except Tuesdays and Fridays.

Best gardens : 2



The Fountain Garden, with Evelyn's Cedar in the background.



Spetchley, the view across the lake.

Spetchley Park

By R. W. Sidwell

THE Spetchley Estate was purchased by Rowland Berkeley in 1605 and has been in the family ever since. This is quite a long time by ordinary standards but Berkeley standards are not ordinary. They have occupied Berkeley Castle continually since the 12th century.

Little seems to have been recorded of the garden at Spetchley in the early days. A fine Cedar of Lebanon near the moat is said to be the one mentioned by John Evelyn in the late 17th century. This author certainly refers to the owner of Spetchley in 1683 as "a most ingenious, virtuous, and religious gentleman, seated near Worcester, and very curious in gardening." The "honourable" was Sir Robert Berkeley, a very distinguished judge of the reign of James I.

The park, with its red and fallow deer, had probably changed little in 200 or more years, but the garden as we see it today is substantially a product of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It was on August 20, 1891 that Rose Willmott (1891) that Rose Willmott married Robert Berkeley of

Spetchley. By the time she died in 1922 the garden had been created. In those 31 years Rose Berkeley built up one of the finest collections of plants in the country.

It would, however, be wrong to give all the credit to Rose. Her sister Ellen Willmott, who continued at Warley until her death in 1933, aged 74, was one of the most famous gardeners of her time. In addition to Warley she had two gardens in France. She knew everyone who mattered in the horticultural world and was able to obtain many plants new to cultivation. Many of these would find their way to Spetchley.

The Fountain Garden is regarded as being Mrs Willmott's special creation. This consists of a central fountain and pool surrounded by four gardens, each enclosed with clipped low hedges. Within the enclosures are a series of beds with paved paths separating them. 36 beds in all. It was, apparently, the original plan that each bed should contain plants of a different family. The approach was thus strictly botanical. The arrangement of the plants in families has since been discontinued but the botanical interest at

Spetchley has never wavered. Most of the plants grown are natural species.

On the death of his mother in 1922 the responsibility for the garden was taken over by the late Captain R. G. L. Berkeley who added continually to the plant collection. Those of us who were fortunate enough to know him, and to be escorted round the garden by him personally, marvelled at his astounding plant knowledge. His encyclopaedic memory continued even when in his later years he was confined to a wheelchair.

The second world war did indeed inflict with Spetchley. Labour problems afterwards meant that many of Mrs Willmott's little gems were lost, but the emphasis changed. A fine collection of various species was planted alongside the lake. Many other trees and shrubs some of great rarity, add dignity and interest.

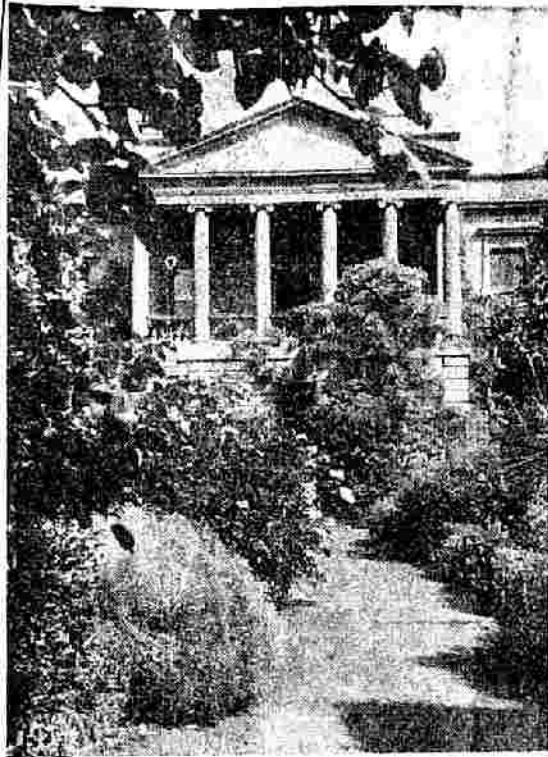
The present owner, Mr R. J. Berkeley, is devoting much of his time to maintaining and further developing the garden. Some books have always been a feature of Spetchley. These are being increasingly pointed out a particularly fine collection of small herb plants, mostly exotics.

The walled garden, a 19th century survival, has some very interesting shrubs on its walls. Here one may find the very rare *Chamaecitrus* and possibly rarer *Rosa hirta*. Nearby are *Lesqueretia indica*, *Heimia salicifolia*, *Diplazium chinensis*, *Salvia bipinnatifida*, *Solanum ornithoglossum*, *Oenothera zinnikerensis*, and many other items of equal interest. There is also the finest double-flowered pomegranate that the writer has ever seen. And perhaps the most distinguished occupant of all, a venerable, gnarled specimen of *Keswick Cedrus*. It seems to look down on the old frame and muse, pondering on the age that has passed.

Spetchley is not the richest of gardens. Fifty years with present-day labour limitations is too much to keep up to the standards that would have been expected 50 years ago. But Spetchley is very beautiful. It has an air of being cared for. It is a place where one can wander about with plenty of space to walk in.

The old kitchen garden is now turned over to a well-managed garden centre where many of the plants in the garden may be purchased. Container-grown.

The garden is open from the beginning of April to the end of October date, except Sunday.



Georgian portico, partly hidden by profuse growth.



Four Squares, the original part of the garden.

BEST GARDENS: 3

Kiftsgate Court

By R. W. Sidwell

Kiftsgate Court is owned by Mr and Mrs J. A. F. Binney, but to go back to the origins of the present day garden we must talk of Mrs Binney's mother, Heather Muir.

It was in 1920 that Mrs Muir commenced to enlarge the existing garden, which consisted of little more than a small formal area in front of the Georgian portico. Mrs Muir was inspired and helped by Lawrence Johnstone, of Hildon, whose estate adjoined that of Kiftsgate.

During the first ten years of development, Mrs Muir was content to deal with the areas of more or less level ground near to the house itself, but in 1930 the banks were brought into the scheme. These are an area of steeply-falling ground forming an arc from North to South-West of the house. The fall is about 100ft., in a horizontal distance of about 500ft. At times the fall is quite precipitous. Zig-zag paths enable the visitor to get up and down without too much effort.

Mrs Binney succeeded her mother in 1954, and development has continued. In 1962 a semi-circular bathing pool was constructed at the foot of the bank on the west side of the house. This is surrounded by an area of lawn,

the level of which is maintained by a high retaining wall. Looking down from this point, one has a delightful view of the valley, with the stream in the bottom and the rising wooden bank opposite. Dutch elm disease has, alas, opened up the view rather more than formerly but, fortunately, many trees remain.

From the outset, Kiftsgate has been noted chiefly for its excellent collection of shrub and species roses, and these are still the chief feature of interest. The famous *Rosa filipes*, "Kiftsgate," claimed to be the largest rose in Britain, is now around 90ft. across and 50ft. high, sprawling over neighbouring trees. It was at one time thought to be *Rosa moschata* and, on seeing it for the first time many years ago, I resolved to have one like it. About 26 years ago I purchased from a leading nursery *Rosa moschata* but, although it makes a brave show, the panicles are tiny by comparison with the Kiftsgate rose, nor do I see my rose ever attaining 90ft diameter.

It would be wrong to think that roses are the only things of interest at Kiftsgate. A large collection of lacecap hydrangens is to be found, including a large bush of *H. villosa*, which seeds down freely, a rare happening in my experience. There is also a fine specimen of *Hydrangea involucrata* hor-

tensis. This is a double form of the parent species and is regarded as being somewhat tender. It thrives at Kiftsgate.

One of the interesting things about Kiftsgate is the number of comparatively tender shrubs that are to be found. It is true that some of these are still young and have not yet faced a really hard winter. Possibly a severe winter would leave some gaps in its wake. Nevertheless, it does seem that the protection given by tall trees and shrubs, particularly on the West and South-West slopes of the bank, allows the cultivation of species that would be considered too tender in many gardens in the district. Hebe *hulkeana*, usually regarded as the finest of the New Zealand "veronicas," is quite happy, as are many other hebes of about equal hardiness. Also from New Zealand are a number of *Clarias*, whose hardiness is also open to question. Nowhere have I seen *Abutilon vitifolium* grow as well as it does at the foot of the bank in this garden. Self-grown seedlings abound. That, after all, is the true test of whether a plant likes its home or not.

Clematis arvensis grows on a low wall in front of the summer house on the middle bank, and it was full of bud when I saw it a few weeks

ago. This early flowering species is evergreen, and is not the hardiest of the genus. It differs from most clematis in being scented.

Many other interesting plants are to be found. On my recent visit I noted *Denaria digitata* and a beautiful little yellow viola which I had not seen before, and which Mrs Binney tells me, is at present nameless.

Mrs Binney maintains a high level of freedom from weeds at Kiftsgate Court. This, in itself, is a labour-saving technique. Once one has attained a weed-free garden with perennial weeds eradicated and annuals never allowed to seed, it becomes comparatively easy to maintain this blissful state. Weeds are, in fact, in terms of labour, the most expensive plants to grow. This has long been realised at Kiftsgate.

We may sum up by saying that, although roses are the main feature, and these are at their peak in early summer, there is still plenty of interest at other times. The garden is open on Thursdays and Sundays from Easter to early September.



The Yew Garden, representing the Sermon on the Mount

BEST GARDENS: 4

Topiary at Packwood House

By R. W. Sidwell

So far in this series we have looked at plantsmen's gardens—that is to say that we have been concerned with gardens in which the main interest has been the wide range of plants grown.

It is true that at Hidcote there are a lot of clipped hedges and bushes but these are subservient to the plant collection. They add interest but do not constitute the main interest.

The art of topiary is probably as old as amenity gardening itself. It was certainly practised by the Romans at least as far back as the first century AD. The word "topiary" is derived from Latin roots meaning "ornamental gardening," and its use in English in its present sense dates from the late 16th century. The fashion probably reached its height in England in the 17th century, and suffered a decline during the 18th century with the great landscape movement headed by Brown and Repton. With the rise of Victorian bedding and the return of formality and fussiness in garden design, topiary again found a place and much of the topiary which has survived into our time was Victorian in origin.

There are, however, a few examples of clipped yew and box which have survived from the earlier period. The most notable is probably

that of Levens Hall in Westmorland, which has come down little changed from 1690, and nearer home is that delightful topiary garden at Chastleton House, Moreton-in-Marsh, which claims origins in the early 18th century.

In the latter garden we find broody pigeons and cuddly-looking, if sometimes unidentifiable, animals arranged in a circle within a clipped hedge. The portrayal of birds and animals in topiary has held a fascination for many an amateur gardener who has sought to create peacocks or, perhaps, guardian lions on the hedge in front of a cottage.

The yew garden at Packwood House was originally set out by John Fetherston between 1650 and 1670. In seeking a design for the scheme, he sought inspiration from the scriptures. He chose neither the fowls of the field nor the beasts of the field but the Sermon on the Mount as the subject for portrayal.

In front of the Mount are 12 clipped yews said to represent the Apostles, and within these are four large specimens known as the Evangelists. They have all waxed fat with the passing of centuries on this rich Warwickshire soil, and seem a little over-crowded now.

On the lawn below are numerous other clipped yews representing the Multitude.

The Mount is similar in

design to the mounts quite common in medieval gardens. These were constructed in order to provide vantage points from which to view the garden, or, perhaps, look over the boundary wall. They were typically conical, with a spiral pathway leading to the top. Box hedges would flank the path and fill the intervening space between the path spirals.

A modern creation of a mount on a small scale is to be seen in the Queen's Garden at Kew behind Kew Palace. The box hedging is kept at about knee-height so that even children can get a clear view of the surrounding garden.

At Packwood the box hedging has got out of hand and, I believe, plans are in hand for restoring it to its original form.

There are many other items of interest in this garden. The Carolean terrace, with its niches for bee skeps in its south flanking wall, is a feature that appeals to me particularly.

Good herbaceous borders, tastefully planted, add plenty of colour during the summer, and an odd little enclosed garden containing a rectangular pool is seasonally filled with brilliant displays of bedding plants.

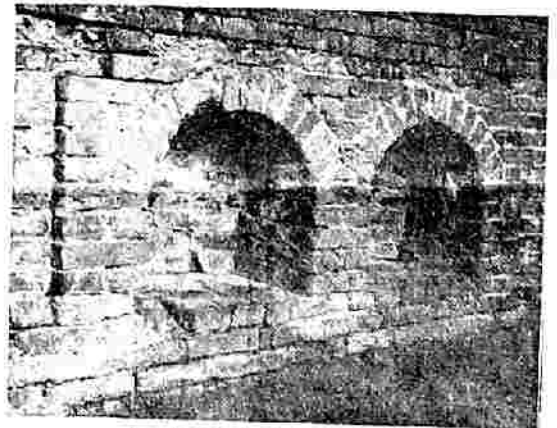
I find the five rose beds under the west facing wall of the South Garden some-

what incongruous. These are separated by hedges two or three feet high. I think my objection stems from two causes. One, I have great objections to having my arms scratched by rose briars when cutting hedges and two, free circulation of air is very desirable if freedom from mildew and black spot is to be obtained. Doubtless, many people like this feature and, perhaps, Packwood does not suffer as much from black spot of roses as we at Evesham do.

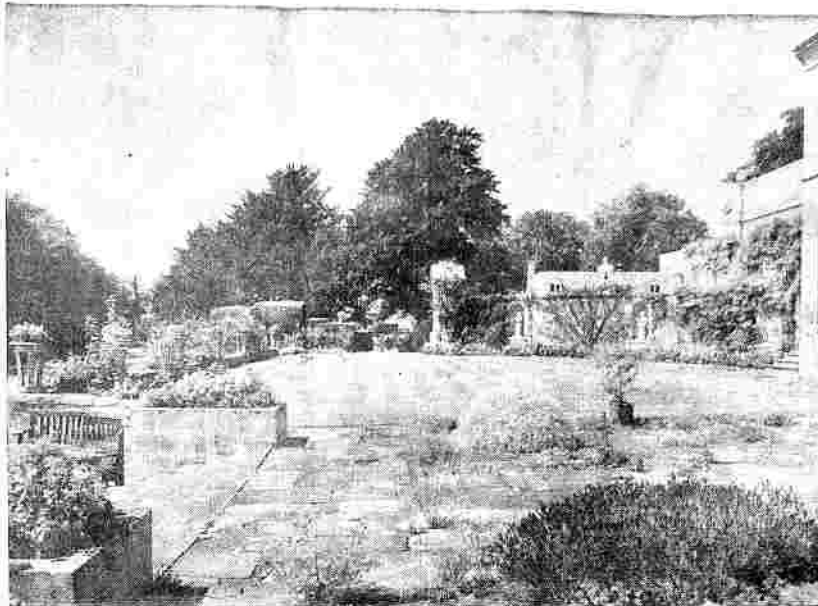
The South Garden has four gazebos at its corners. One of these is 17th century, the others later. There are some

interesting sundials and an attractive lake and, in spite of the implication of my opening remarks about plantsmen's gardens, there are some interesting shrubs and other plants for those who seek them.

Packwood House is now the property of the National Trust, and it is open daily from April to September, except Mondays and Fridays, from 2 p.m. to 7 p.m., and from October to March on Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. It is situated near Hockley Heath, just off the main Birmingham-Strafford road.



Bee skep niches in a terrace wall



Pusey — the terrace.

Pusey House

BEST GARDENS 5

By R. W. Sidwell

On visiting Pusey for the first time, as the writer did a couple of weeks ago, one is immediately impressed by the impeccable good taste in layout and planting.

With many large gardens, and Pusey is a very large garden, there are jarring features that are survivals from earlier fashions and tastes in garden design. These seem to be peculiarly absent here. The reason for this is apparent when one considers the history of this very fine garden.

Pusey House was built in 1748 and the surrounding grounds were laid out by "Capability" Brown shortly after. The lake is a typical Brown effort and many fine trees still standing would have been planted at this time. Some deserve special mention. Two taxodians are the largest that the writer can recall seeing and a fine specimen of the London Plane is little, if any, smaller than the Mottifont Abbey tree, usually regarded as the largest in Britain. There are cypresses, cedars and, among native trees, many beech.

During the 19th century, Pusey acquired some of the usual Victorian trimmings and when the present owners, Mr and Mrs Michael Hornby, purchased the property in 1935, the careful removal of some of these features to restore the mid-18th century character was undertaken. Geoffrey Jellicoe designed a broad flight of steps leading down from the main terrace on the south side of the house. Much of the modern development, however, had to wait until after the war and the garden we see today has been created since 1945, within the framework of Brown's original plan.

Good use has been made of walls for the growing of the more tender shrubs. *Abutilon megapotanicum* flourishes and there are specimens of *Solanum crispum*, *Piptanthus nepalensis*, *Ostrya thurii*, *Hamamelis*, as well as many clematis, vines, ceanothus and other choice shrubs.

There is a collection of shrub roses and use is also made of the modern floribunda for providing splashes of colour over a long period.

But the most interesting feature of Pusey is the expert way the woodland areas have been planted with a wide range of plants giving variety of colour, form and texture. Planting is done in large irregular beds separated by wide, mown grass paths. Shrubs are carefully chosen

to provide a second tier to the trees. Herbaceous plants and dwarf shrubs are used at ground level. We thus have a system of planting resembling that of natural open woodland.

Each area has its own character and, although natural wild species are freely used, special garden forms are not despised. One bed, for instance, has largely variegated plants.

The soil has a fairly high lime content and most of the shrubs and plants are chosen for their lime tolerance but a few lime-haters are to be found growing on prepared sites. A large group of *Erythronium*, var. *Pagoda*, was in full bloom at the time of the writer's visit. They are particularly fine.

New trees are being planted and old trees are removed and, with good management, the next two centuries are well catered for.

There is one feature which is probably quite unique. It certainly is in the writer's experience. More than a century ago, a beech tree produced a layer which rooted. Whether this was by accident or design is difficult to say, but I suspect deliberate layering. This rooted layer, now a large tree, has produced two further layers which are also large trees now and are still attached to their parent by their "umbilical cord." The original parent is still a fine healthy tree and the whole group looks quite happy except that the layers have not attained a truly upright stance.

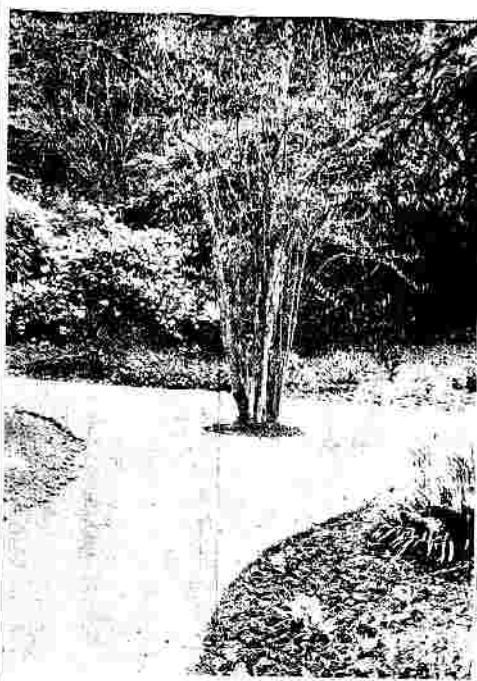
In addition to the shrub areas where herbaceous plants are used for ground cover, there are some very fine herbaceous borders stocked with a wide range of plants which will give a good display during the summer.

Much of the success of Pusey derives from the fact that both Mr and Mrs Hornby take a personal interest in the garden and do a great deal of the work themselves. This has led to a planter's garden in which the overall design element has not been overlooked. And one final point that pleased the writer very much — daisies are allowed to grow on lawns.

Pusey lies about five miles from Faringdon, half a mile south of the A420 Faringdon to Oxford road. The garden is open on Wednesdays and Thursdays from April 10 to July 11, and daily from July 16 to October 16, and also Saturday, Sunday and Monday on Bank Holiday weekends. The hours are 2 p.m. to 6.30 p.m.



Gateway from Lady Emily's garden.



Wild garden area by the stream garden.

BEST GARDENS: 6

Upton House

By R. W. Sidwell

Upton House has just south of Edge Hill on the Stratford in Hanbury road (A452). The spring is near perfect.

The south-facing *Amorpha* looks over a double terrace and a large expanse of lawn terminated by what appears to be a slight rise in the ground that is quite from *Amorpha* hills.

In fact, the *Amorpha* is the main part of the garden, which is reached by one walk to the edge of the lawn. A series of terraces and sloping banks connect the large rectangular lake, rather on the Dutch style, at the foot of the ground. An attractive *Amorpha* leads down from the southwest corner of the main lawn. Much of the lake is covered probably dates from the 17th century, and Upton seems to have escaped the alterations of the notable landscape architects of the 18th century, at least as far as the garden is concerned. Perhaps Capart-Brown could not think of a better way of handling the steep slopes. Perhaps he wasn't asked. Whatever the reason, the park as I find it is beautiful. A garden's garden. At times it comes back to being an overgrown garden. There are two areas to be seen, the *Amorpha* garden, Titania, and the *Amorpha* garden.

Perhaps the most surprising feature is the *Amorpha* garden, spread on the level slope just above the lake. In most

large garden we have grown accustomed to, kitchen gardens being enclosed within walls often far from the house. It is true that a wall runs along the upper side but the kitchen garden is otherwise an integral part of the garden as a whole and there is no attempt to conceal it. One thinks of what some garden designers would have done with this area and one feels glad that in this case it did happen.

Each of the terraces has its own character. The top one is predominantly filled with very foliage. The middle has a large collection of interesting shrubs in addition to the tree that give it its name. The wall above the kitchen garden has many plants on it and in front of it is a border of delphiniums, many one of the largest delphinium borders in Britain.

There is a little recent addition enclosed with hedges and filled with bedding plants in season. Just above the west end of the lake is another lake, a more formal enclosed with perfectly clipped hedges. From the point of view of design it is difficult to see how the house can be justified somehow or other and it is there likely to remain. The result makes a most pleasant

On the west side of the main lake, as a group of walks, on another a steep bank, at the bottom of which is a water garden. There is a small in the north-east corner of the garden, known as the Monk's Well. The lake is a small one, a pool of water in a hollow with the water level well below the level of the surrounding ground. The lake

is traversed by well-sculpted grass paths and these remove some of the naturalness which the setting deserves. One can imagine this area treated in a natural wood-land garden, with gravel paths, wooden, rustic benches through the trees, shrubs and ground cover plants. One could realize the spring of *Amorpha* which such a lawn would achieve.

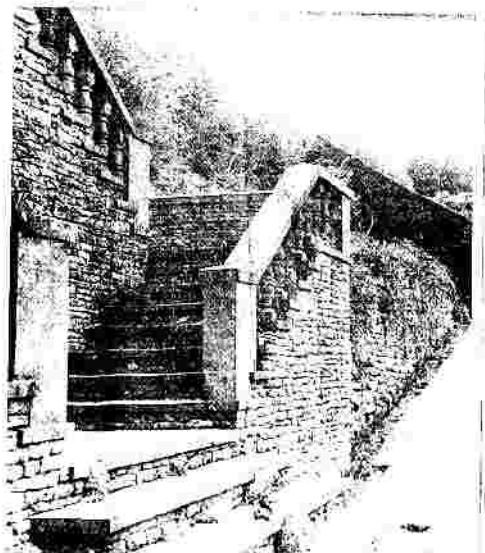
Clusia trees and other plants in the water garden have one very distinctive, *Amorpha* and many others. Some attractive trees form a permanent feature and granules *Amorpha* and other *Amorpha*-loving plants grow happily.

A recently planted *Amorpha* tree is growing at such a pace to a well-chosen site that one wonders whether one day it will reach the gates of K. H. G. Court. Claims of the *Amorpha* group cover large areas on the west side of the water garden.

There is much of interest in the garden. A large plant collection, fine herbaceous borders, and all managed with a professionalism that we rarely find nowadays. The 20th century has not been allowed to intrude too much.

All will feel something of interest here. If you cannot climb steep slopes, just stay on the top lawn and look. In any case, the contents of the house are regarded as the main attraction—but they are not for me to write about.

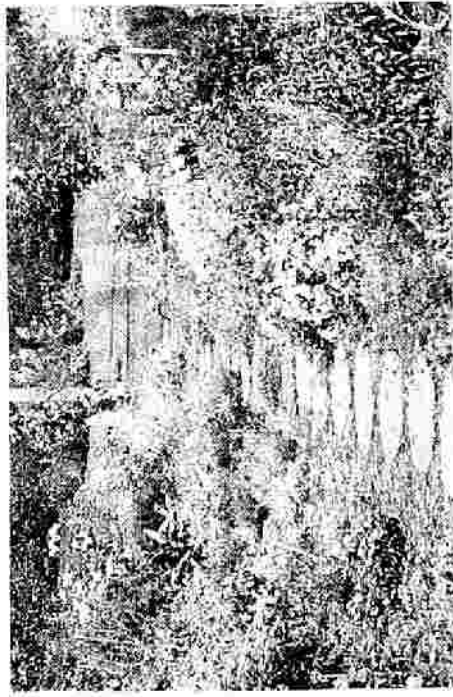
It is now the property of the National Trust. It is open to the public on Wednesdays and Saturdays from May to September, 2 pm to 4 pm.



Steps leading down from the main lawn to the Monk's Well.

BEST GARDENS

The Priory, Kemerton



Hitherto in this series I have dealt with gardens which are open throughout the summer for at least one day a week. This is a point that may not have been apparent to many readers who will have wondered why some extremely fine gardens have not yet been included.

This week we depart from our rule to have a look at Mr and Mrs. R. P. Heald's very delightful garden at Kemerton.

It is not known how the name "Priory" came to be associated with the site. There may have been a priory here but there is no proof of this. The attractive ruin of which three walls remain may have been no more than a cottage, but it provides a touch of character which could not have been deliberately created.

The origins of this garden in its present form go back to 1946 when Mr Heald left the RAF to return to civilian life. Since then the three acre garden

has been slowly evolving. Each year sees some new development, some new plants. Nothing is static. No time garden can ever be static. Even those that are maintained as museum pieces, because of their historical importance must change over the years but a real live garden is a scene of constant change. This garden is essentially Mr Heald's own creation and most of the work is done with his own hands. Such gardens are always easily recognisable by a certain aura not easily defined. The garden is neither unkept nor too messy looking. It is a peaceful place where plants and people seem equally happy. The cultural standard of the householder is very high.

There is a pleasant blend of formality and informality, the natural and the contrived. The colour painted herbaceous borders are a main feature and are just about the finest of their kind that I know. The stream garden, which forms the western boundary, is an excellent example of natural plantings. Garden New mias and many other moisture-loving plants

There is a substantial lawn area that provides a setting for specimen trees. Some of these, still young, will add increasingly to the character of the garden over the coming century.

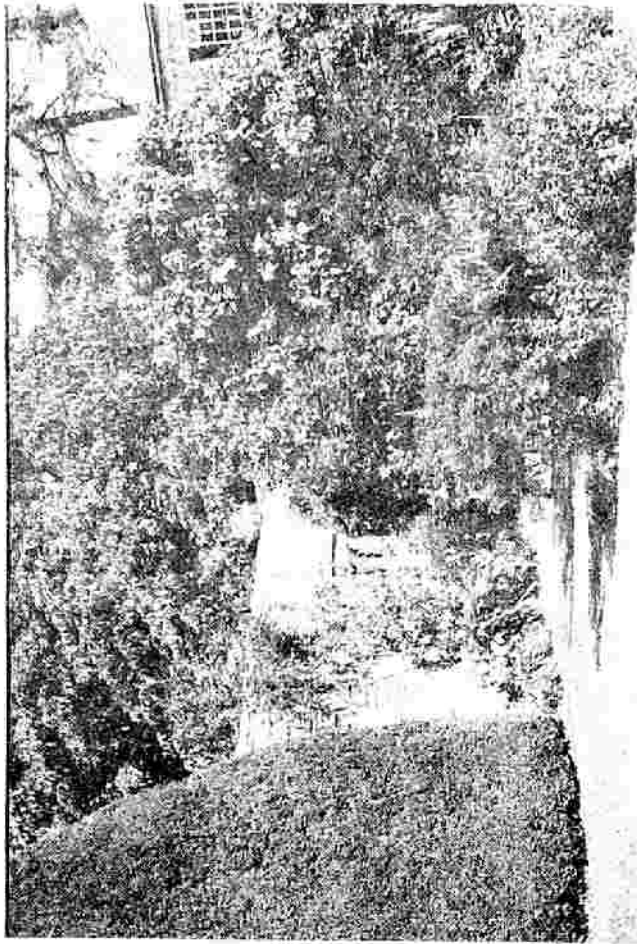
This is, above all, a plantman's garden. New plants are sought from nurseries and nurseries in remote parts of the country and when they are established here they seem just that much better than they do elsewhere, for Mr Heald is a fine cultivator of plants.

This is one of the few large gardens where some years ago exhibits of these were prominent among the prizewinners at local shows. Today they are grown for home consumption but they are still grown well.

An orchard house extends the range of plants grown and back again the growing standards are high. Orchard grapes are used for wine making and crops seemed promising when I saw them recently.

This is a garden that all will enjoy. It is open on Sunday next, September 7, from 2 pm to 7 pm.

By R. W. Sidwell



Rousham House

BEST

GARDENS.

By R. W. Sidwell

The gardens at Rousham have a niche in history—they are the only gardens designed by William Kent to have come down practically unaltered.

Horace Walpole, writing some 20 years after the gardens were laid out, considered Rousham "the most engaging of Kent's works." He continued: "It has reinstated Kent with me; he has nowhere shown so much taste."

The house was built by Sir Robert Dormer around 1635, and it has remained in the Dormer family ever since. Charles Bridgeman, who laid out Kensington Gardens and Stowe, designed the "New Garden" at Rousham about 1715-20 with some possible collaboration from Alexander Pope, but by 1738 Kent produced plans for replacing it with sweeping slopes ornamented with "fountains, statues and buildings in the Italian taste."

The garden is said to have taken four years to complete and to have used the labour of 70 men at the height of the work. Kent, a very busy man, would look in twice a year to see how work was progressing.

But what of Rousham today? Kent's hard surfaces remain much as he left them. Two of the four ponds have gone, and the others are, perhaps, a little less trim than in his day. In the Octagon Pond we find *Hottonia palustris*, an uncommon native, flourishing and full of flower. But Rousham is not for the botanist or plantsman. It consists mainly of sweeping grass slopes surrounded by and interspersed with fine trees. Gardening is done by gang mowers.

A few trees probably date from Kent's time, notably the fine cedar behind the Temple of Echo. This once had three almost erect trunks arising from a crotch 18 feet from the ground. Recently one of these were removed. Kent, no doubt, inherited mature trees in which to place his design, and the planting of replacements has continued up to the present time. There has, however, been no attempt to modernise the planting and the kinds of trees and shrubs are those of the 18th century. One can wander through this peaceful setting down to the river Cherwell and to the 13th century Heyford Bridge.

But there is another



Kent's arcade.

Rousham. The walled garden, which was there before Kent's time, has changed continually over the years and, probably, reached its height in the late 19th century. Older generations may remember the onion, Rousham Park Hero, which appeared in most seedsman's catalogues for the first 30 years of the present century. This was a selection made by a certain William Wingrave, who came to Rousham as head gardener about 1895.

The walled garden today is tidy, but that is all. Roses have replaced fruit trees on much of the wall space, and most of the vegetable areas have been grassed down and mown. A few geese occupy one part. Two rows of gnarled old espalier apples mark what was formerly the centre path. There are some pleasant herbaceous borders, adding colour.

Much of the glass has been demolished, but some derelict pits remind one of the days when pineapples and melons formed a normal part of the cropping programme.

The stokehole and four-inch hot water pipes probably date from the 19th century and would have replaced the original flue heating of the century before.

The writer has long had a desire to restore one of these old walled gardens to its original state. And no place is better suited to such treatment than Rousham. But it

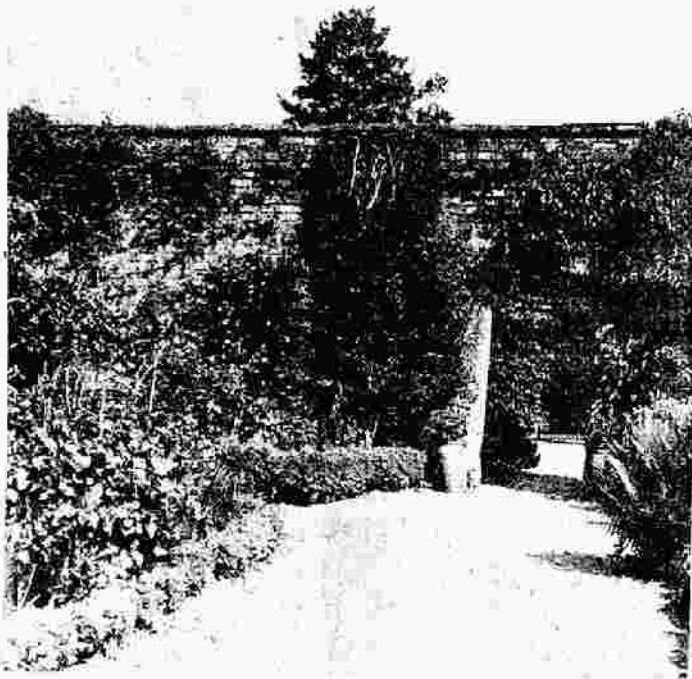
would cost money. Furthermore, it would demand skills that are hard to find nowadays. But if just one such place could be restored as a permanent museum it would be a great achievement. It will soon be too late.

Adjoining the walled garden is a rose garden which probably dates from the mid-19th century. This consists of an intricate pattern of beds edged with box, and is well maintained, as, indeed, is everything at Rousham.

Nearby is the dovecote, or, as Rousham prefers to call it, the pigeon house. This superb structure, perhaps the finest of its kind in Britain, still has its revolving ladder and is in excellent repair after almost three centuries of use. Its occupants today are about eight pairs of Norwich Croppers which look, to the writer, like the breed of pigeons we called "pouters" in days gone by.

Around the pigeon house is a pleasant well-mown lawn and here can be found a few modern shrubs tastefully planted. *Calycanthus floridus* was in full bloom last week, and gave to that corner of the lawn its characteristic heavy smell which, with the closing of local breweries, is becoming less familiar to most of us.

Rousham lies just off the B4000 Ilchester to Enstone road. The house is open on Wednesdays and Bank Holidays from June to August. The gardens are open daily



Part of the walled garden.



Ann Hathaway's cottage garden.

BEST GARDENS: 8

Shakespeare gardens

By R. W. Sidwell

One of the main functions of a garden of an historic building is that it should provide a pleasant place for visitors to walk around.

It should be an acceptable setting for the building but not necessarily part of its history. The philosopher lies behind the garden and the importance of the garden is determined by the Shakespeare's Birthplace Trust.

There is, however, another policy superimposed on the above: the garden should be a link with the works of Shakespeare and to provide an example of garden design of Shakespearean times. The two policies become confused.

Perhaps the most successful of the Shakespearean gardens is that of Holywell, this is a modern garden of simple design and elegant proportions. The garden area by the house with a few bushes of lavender and rosemary leads to a gravel path flanked by herbaceous borders. The row of ironstone pillars would hardly have been planned deliberately by a modern designer, but since they were there, it would have been certain to remove them and they had that decorative character which is often achieved by the accidental. This is a garden that almost anyone would be pleased to have, whereas the period of the house with which it is associated is lost except the name. It may be said of the Great Garden of New Place that the house is now lost, with the herbaceous borders behind low hedges and separated by narrow paths into smaller units. There are also large beds edged with box and planted with seasonal bedding plants. The influence is almost Victorian but I am sure many people find it attractive.

The Knot Garden at New Place is a different category. This is an attempt to reproduce an historical

design and this one might expect to be successful. The major plants, herbs and flowers are quite small and the background beds perfect. Cleanly mown, a 19th century impression, and a little. The knot garden is in a garden square in the middle.

The older knot gardens used were built such as lavender, hyacinth and marjoram. They were clipped into neat hedges and the spaces used for growing. By the late 18th century the knot was known as French or Dutch box, and largely replaced the herbs, owing to its greater permanence. The knot garden at Holywell is an all these materials and there are hand-drawn plans.

It is when we look at the plants and the knot garden that we have to take a sharp breath. The effect is boring. The most garish strains of modern bedding plants are also in a manner that would be appropriate in a garden in the 18th or 19th century and most of the plants and varieties are 20th century creations.

The truth is, of course, that Elizabethan gardens were, by modern parks standards, quite dull places. Dull but not uninteresting to those who love plants. However, the public has not used the kind of material that has grown to expect it. To change it would be to deny the house. We must remain sensitive very much to the fact that this is not intended to be an example of Shakespearean garden but is part of the Shakespearean heritage, planted through it.

In the Birthplace Garden, a new factor comes in. Here it is to be found plants mentioned by Shakespeare. It has these. Now it must be appreciated that

some do not imply that it was grown in Britain in Shakespeare's day. More of the plants had Mediterranean origins. He must perhaps mention Mediterranean plants that were in Britain in 1564. There was first the olive, though that was not introduced until much later. The olive leaf is a symbol of reference. What I would like to see here is a further variety of the plants for the kitchen garden. I think with an effort we could find some plants similar to those grown in the 16th century and not purchased over the counter in the local store. But even in the Birthplace Garden the most modern herbaceous borders are to be found and the most conventional, uninteresting

At Ann Hathaway's, I think we have a garden that is the best Elizabethan garden but in fact it is the same mixture as before. The herbaceous plants are much

the same but are placed in broader light than the knot garden. There is a "kitchen" garden which I find attractive — but what we have here are herbaceous borders dotted in to fill up the gaps. And that sort of solution, interpreted with taste, is just too much, although it must be admitted that Shakespeare would have seen something very like the garden at the Holywell of his time. It would also be better if the garden on the front of the house could be replanted with 16th century plants from the 16th and 17th century.

On my recent visit to the garden at Ann Hathaway's, I was struck by the fact that the garden was not intended to be an example of Shakespearean garden but in fact it is the same mixture as before. The herbaceous plants are much

Continued on Page 31.



The knot garden at New Place.



BEST GARDENS 10

Orchard Cottage, Gretton

By R. W. Sidwell

Turn up Duglych Lane, just by the Haggitt Inn, and on the right-hand side at the top of the lane is Orchard Cottage, the home of Mrs. Nancy Saunders—botanist, traveller and gardener.

In the garden which covers about an acre, you will find one of the largest collections of plants in the district. It is essentially a plantman's (or should it be plantwoman's?) garden.

Nancy Saunders has collected plants from Leningrad to Spain, from the Balkans and beyond. She has hunted and collected in Persia, Afghanistan, Nepal, North Africa, Kenya and North America and many of the results of her expeditions are to be found in her beautiful garden.

She has a keen eye for a plant that indefinable quality which makes a plant appeal to one even though it is not "showy". It registers instantly with her.

"It grows as a roadside weed over most of Italy. Nobody bothers to collect it but I like these furry seed pods."

It would be wrong to suppose that the garden contains only obscure botanical specimens, of interest only to the specialist. There is a large collection of old roses and some species and many other plants of wide appeal.

The garden and cottage were purchased in 1950. At that time it consisted of an ordinary cottage garden with an orchard beyond. For some time the orchard remained an orchard, but ten years ago the planting of trees commenced—to create a woodland garden. The old fruit trees were retained and some fine specimens of apple and pear trees give maturity and character. The orchard has thus become a little arboretum, with some very rare trees and many others of great interest.

In this garden, as elsewhere, a succession of mild winters has led to the optimistic planting of many plants formerly regarded as too tender for our climate. I saw for the first time *Hibiscus stratiolita* in flower. This may indeed be harder than some of the gums and, if so, could become popular, for it is very beautiful.

There are some puzzling features of this garden. *Pernettya mucronata* was flourishing. This is a plant of cold soils which should look yellow and sickly on the light lime clay of the Cotswold foothills. Yet, with apparently little special treatment, it is as rich a green as one would find it on Hagshot Heath. I resolved to be more adventurous myself and try it out on my own similar soil.

There is little point in giving a list of the rare plants in this garden, even if space permitted, but there were a few here that attracted my attention and are worth noting. A dense, broadly conical specimen of *Taxodium distichum* was apparently just an accident. It came like that. All the other specimens I have seen were taller, narrower and much less dense-

in growth. There is a fine young specimen of the very common oriental plant with its deeply lobed leaves. This ordinary, as London plants, is supposed to be a hybrid between the oriental and American species and to have arisen in the 17th century.

An interesting collection of *maurandias* species is being established, including the very rare *E. conata*, with its curious horned fruits.

There are some attractive sorbus, not exactly rare, but always interesting. *S. vitifolius* was heavily laden with fruit.

Prospective visitors should note that this is not a garden of highly-coloured bedding plants. There are no beds of begonias edged with lobelia. The garden is maintained by the owner with a little casual help. The planting and management aims at creating the wild atmosphere that Mrs. Saunders knows so well in her head. There is no special design element in its conception. No central plan, other than that of creating situations where plants from all corners of the world will grow and thrive side by side.

The garden is open by appointment at any time, following Winckcombe 02491. Proceeds go to the National Gardens Scheme. It is also open without appointment from 10.30 to 12.00 on the last day of October, August 2-11, unless noted, 1952. Sunday from 2.00 to 4.00 pm. I think you will find it worth a visit.



There is a "tunnel" of birch.



The orchard has become a little arboretum.



BEST GARDENS: 13

Compton Wynnyates

By R. W. Sidwell

Comptons have owned Compton Wynnyates since the beginning of the 13th century. The present house is substantially 15th and 16th century but the garden is comparatively modern, dating from 1893-1895.

The present owner is the sixth Marquess of Northampton. The family has served with distinction in many ways over the centuries, but one has a special place in horticulture and, although not directly connected with Compton Wynnyates, the story is probably worth telling.

Henry Compton (1632-1713), sixth son of the second earl, was a cornet in the Royal Horse Guards but, being dissatisfied with promotion prospects, decided to try his hand at the Church. So successful was he in his new venture that he became Bishop of London in 1675, and held that office, not without difficulties, until his death.

John Evelyn seems to have

held him in high esteem although he writes: "this worthy person's talent is not preaching." He seems to have been rather too progressive for some of his brethren and was once actually suspended from duties. However, his contributions to horticulture were better appreciated.

At that time the diocese of London seems to have extended to the American colonies and Henry Compton, who was always looking for new plants for his garden at Fulham Palace, decided to combine the propagation of the gospel with botanising and he sent the Rev John Bannister to Virginia with that object. The whole story is too long to tell here, but the result was to give the bishop the finest collection of exotic plants in the kingdom and many of these are grown in our gardens today.

There are no records of the garden of Compton Wynnyates in its Tudor heyday and it seems to have passed into decline in the 17th century. The ha-ha, which borders the garden on two sides,

is presumably 18th century but by the mid 19th century this ha-ha was apparently keeping sheep in rather than out, for the large area on the south side was being grazed by sheep when the fifth marquess constructed the present topiary garden on this site towards the end of the last century.

This area seems to have long been known to the family as the "Best Garden," even when it was mere sheep pasture, and one can speculate on what vast formal gardens might have occupied the site in earlier times.

Today, the Best Garden is a fine museum piece of late Victorian topiary and formal bedding, probably one of the best examples of its kind in the country. Two of the clipped bushes are said to represent Henry VIII, two Elizabeth I. It was a nice thought but none is complimentary to either father or daughter. There is an unusual turf bridge over a small central pool that could be quite modern, but I do not know its age or origin.

Large sweeping lawns surround the house and provide an appropriate setting. On the north is a straight-sided water area forming three sides of a square. The

area within has large shrub and herbaceous areas with grass paths. This water is known as the Moat, but it has much in common with a Dutch-style garden. No doubt it is the remains of a moat surrounding an earlier house.

There is no walled garden with its glasshouses and other appendages, which one expects to find in a garden of this kind. One must have existed at one time but it is certainly well concealed if it exists today. Professional gardeners of the last century would have regarded the walled garden as "the garden." It was here that the gardening skills were seen at their best. The lawns and topiaries were the pleasure grounds where the skills were mostly tidying up.

The setting for Compton Wynnyates is interesting and attractive, being at the bottom of a steep slope. It does not command the views that one often finds, but it probably enjoys protection from winds.

The garden is open on Saturdays, Sundays and Wednesdays until the end of September from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. It lies about three miles south of the A422 Stratford to Banbury road at Edge

Fairlawns, Bishop's Cleeve

By R. W. Sidwell

The season for visiting gardens is almost over and on a damp, cold autumn day I select for the final article in this series a garden run wholly without paid help.

There are many gardens where retired people achieve a high standard of cultivation in some specified field. Fairlawns is remarkable in the uniformly high standard maintained over a very wide range of plant growing.

Colonel A. H. Ogden retired to Fairlawns 12 years ago. He has had a long interest in horticulture, as exemplified by many years' membership of the Royal Horticultural Society, the Alpine Garden Society and the Delphinium Society.

The name "Fairlawns" carries more significance

than some of the contrived names given to people's homes for the lawns here are more than fair, in fact they are probably the finest agrostics-fescue mixture that I have seen this year. The management is faultless.

I have frequently commented on the value of leaving old fruit trees when planning new gardens. They give that touch of maturity which is lost if the whole site is cleared. We have a good example of this here, where a few apple trees mellow the brashness that is sometimes associated with new gardens.

There is also a medlar near the front door. Why are medlars not more widely planted? Their spreading dome-shaped habit makes them ideal for smaller gardens. Not everyone likes medlars to eat, but I can assure those who are interested that they

make excellent wine, not unlike that made from hawthorn fruits. The medlar is, after all, a close relative of the hawthorn.

Still on the subject of fruit, mention must be made of the fine crop of Peregrine peaches which I saw here on my recent visit. This white-fleshed variety is still about the best we have for cultivation out-of-doors in Britain, but how rarely do we see fan-pruned peaches properly pruned and free from leaf-curl nowadays? Colonel Ogden's tree is as near perfect as can be imagined and would not have been surpassed in the walled gardens of the 19th century.

Lilies and delphiniums, which are both notable features, had obviously long finished flowering when I saw the garden, but one could imagine what they had been like.

Many rock plants were

still in bloom and, in particular, Cyclamen neapolitanum was making a good effort. The collection of rock plants is considerable, as one would expect from a member of the Alpine Garden Society. As with the other plants, the management seemed perfect.

Conifers are carefully used and I was intrigued with the buttress-clipped chamaecyparis against the boundary fence.

There are roses, some bedding plants, chrysanthemums as well as soft fruit and vegetables, in this smallish garden. It is a good example of what can be achieved if one applies one's energies meticulously to every detail of garden management.

The garden is not normally open to the public but I am sure that Colonel Ogden would be pleased to meet gardeners as enthusiastic as himself, if approached.

Wines from garden and hedgerow

By R. W. SIDWELL

The purist may say that the only true wine is that made from grapes. Some gradually allow that alcoholic drinks made from other fruits by similar processes can be called wines provided they have the appropriate quality adjective. The rest of us think that any acceptable alcoholic drink made from any type of plant material by wine-making methods can be called wine. The argument will go on.

My own attitude is quite clear. I am prepared to limit the term "wine" to the product of the grape, provided we can find a suitable alternative name for the other drinks and products. The continental wine makers will disagree but I think their English grape wine is reserved for the most detectable of drinks made from berries and rose petals.

Of course, grape wine at its best is perhaps the best of all wines and the present great revival of wine-making in Britain has already proved that grape wine of the highest quality can be produced in this country. The Vale of Evesham has grown grapes before and it has a very suitable climate for their production.

On commercial wine grounds, I will say little except that it is not likely to be less profitable than a good crop of other crops and should be more profitable than some. Mr. R. H. Rowland has written on some aspects of this elsewhere in this supplement.

The private grower has many advantages over the commercial grower. He does not have to charge his time up for one thing (What is the real cost of producing an exhibition chrysanthemum bloom or a two pound onion. And think what one has to pay for a bottle of wine).

Several pruning methods are in use among grape growers. Most continental vineyards use a rational system based on Guyot.

The traditional English glasshouse method used a "herringbone" spur system but this has long been superseded by a spur

pruned horizontal rod. I like this system and it is being used with modifications for outdoor wine projects in some modern vineyards.

My only fruiting vine at the moment is a 12-year-old Chasselas d'Or on the front wall of the cottage. This has been trained on the horizontal spur system and gives me about 50 lb of fruit a year. This is a high class dessert grape when well opened. Unfortunately it requires the warmth of a wall to finish well. We get about half the crop as desired and make wine with its uneatable remains. Which, as anyone who has tried it will tell you, is not the best way to make wine. However, I have trained to reform it in the next year and the best grapes next year.

There are now many more large vineyards in this country and the behaviour of the varieties is well understood. Many have proved themselves excellent without wall protection.

HEAVY CROPPER

The most favoured variety for quality wine is Riesling x Sylvaner. This is quite a heavy cropper and should always be included in any collection. It is a white grape and produces a wine of black type.

An even heavier cropper is the hybrid white grape known as Villard 8275. Not quite equal in flavour but perhaps the easiest to grow and very resistant to mildew. It makes very high yielding grapes for the garden.

An earlier ripening variety of great merit is Madeline Sylvaner 2831. The German variety Siegerrebe is perhaps the earliest of all to ripen. Classed as a white grape the skin develops a brownish tint when ripe but it makes white wine. This is a dual purpose grape as it is of high, dessert quality. Unfortunately it can sometimes be a nuisance with all early ripening grapes.

For red wine Setbel 1103 is in a class of its own. Its juice is of the richest colour. It is mid-season ripening with good resistance to mildew. Wines can be quite high.

These are the best varieties for outdoor growing although some of the older sorts are still widely grown with some success. Newer varieties are being tried.

For a warm wall the already mentioned Chasselas d'Or should be first choice. It is vigorous and prolific. But what of other wine-making materials? I will not dwell on the ordinary commercial fruits except to say that all edible fruits make wine if properly handled and some of these are quite superb. This is possibly the best way to deal with a bit of plum.

Many ornamental fruits can be used for wine. The coronacherry is an example. Some of these, particularly C. rotundifolia and its hybrids are too strongly flavoured but C. sinensis, franchetti, and bullata are quite pleasant. The best way to test the suitability of a certain variety for wine-making is simply to eat a sample. If it is rather like a Hawthorn fruit but with a little more character it should be good. If it makes you screw



Vine Chasselas d'Or on the writer's cottage being pruned.

your mouth up, avoid it or use it sparingly for blending.

Crab apples, including all the ornamental kinds, make good wine. They should be milled or chopped and then pressed fairly quickly. If left too long before pressing the juice made will not be removed from the fruit and the wine will be very poor.

It is, however, the non-fruit wines that offer the real challenge to the home wine maker. The flower wine above all suits the taste delicacy of flavour. Roses will yield more wine per acre than grapes. Dark red, juicy scented varieties are best. Grape harvest picking is a somewhat prickly job but there is a period in May when the main crop of flowers at the end of the bushes stand out above the prickles. This can be removed by the hand or at least thumb and finger nail. Otherwise the flowers must be plucked singly, a time-consuming job and prohibitive if one charges ones time up. It, however, is in time on some varieties the flowers when taken the day for a walk time does not matter and the bees will appreciate the extra robbing time.

All flower wines should be sulphured and extracted cold, otherwise the delicate bouquet will be lost. For flower perfumes are volatile and are driven off by heating.

Leaf and shoot wines are extracted by hot water treatment, either by pouring hot water on to the shoots or by immersing plants for about 10 to 15 minutes. Two criteria operate in the choice of green plant material, or indeed any plant material for wine making. Is it non-poisonous? Is the flavour acceptable? If yes in both cases, go ahead. Some highly flavoured materials can be used in small quantities in blends. Mixed herb wine can be quite exciting. Thyme and parsley can be acceptable. Sage and onion is doubtful.

NETTLE BEER

A good basis for herb wines, and herb beer too, is the ordinary stinging nettle. Nettle beer has been made for centuries. Mixed with lemon balm and possibly a little ginger it produces a first class drink whether made as a wine or as beer. Put a pair of rubber gloves on for picking. As the season progresses aphids attack stinging nettles and they become unsuitable for our purpose. The nettles most appreciated are the first young shoots of spring. These may be partly southered by such weeds as cleavers and green chickweed. The old dead stalks from last year can also interfere. The remedy is to take off the dead stalks in the very early spring before the young

shoots start to grow and pick out weed seed. The nettles can then be cut at ground level with a good heavy blade in the way some ornamental growers cut paths of same. Nettles grow in rich soil and fertilizer application is usually unnecessary. Please now and then. You have probably just read the first description of another article of my garden publishing in the English language. It is possible in other languages.

Shoot tips of any of the roseaceous trees and shrubs are good for wine making. This means apples, pears, plum, cherries, crab fruits, Hawthorn, roses and many others. The soft, summer pruned, shoots of trees can also be used. Some friends once told me that my wine sheet was better than that sometimes made from grapes. Of course they may have been thinking of my grape wine. The complaint was perhaps doubtful.

Oak leaf is a wine I make every year. As soon as the young shoots are above the soil in the spring take them off completely and use them the hot water treat ment. The plant yields as many insect pests as the oak tree. If you are a health conscious you will say that no plant supports such an increasing range of wild life. The oak tree is, in fact, an enemy stem on its own. I would not interfere with this just pick early, during May, before the animal life has established unless you prefer stout.

This leaves us with roots resembling Parsnip wine has been made for centuries often too sweet and usually too strong. I have cut the quantity of parsnips down to 2 lb per gallon. Most recipes give four or more. I found that it is a matter of taste. Carrots are even better than parsnips in my estimation and I have made very good wine from artichokes and radish.

The mention of quantities reminds me that some readers might like to have guidance on this. This is not an article on wine making but the quantities of plant materials may be appropriate. Here then in tabular form.

- Grapes 6 lb
Plum, cherries and most fruits 6 lb
Blackcurrants, loganberries 2 lb
Rose petals 1 gallon
Elder flowers 1 pint
Clove and most flowers 2 pints
Leaf and shoot material 1 to 1 gallon
Roots 2 to 4 lb.



Madeline Sylvaner in an Essex vineyard. Double Guyot system before pruning.

Let me tell you a tale of the Wild Service Tree

YOU may be excused and, indeed, I hope I may be excused also, for failing to demonstrate immediate familiarity with the Wild Service Tree.

My day to day humdrumery hinges not upon its welfare. The Service Tree has not exactly slapped me upon the face of my consciousness—to tell the shamefaced truth, until a recent rude awakening, I had never even heard of the Service Tree.

All of this might have been, under many circumstances, quite unremarkable. After all—none of us considers himself to be all-knowing. However, there are certain complications to this otherwise simple story. There are, I should explain, good reasons why you and I should both know a great deal about the Service Tree.

The Wild Service Tree is so known because it needed to be distinguished from the "True Service Tree," a continental species sometimes grown in gardens, which bears an edible pear-shaped fruit.

The Wild Service Tree on the other hand, is rarely, if ever, planted (for some obscure reason) and therefore, is indicative of woodland surviving from primeval times. This is what, primarily, makes the tree of significance to naturalists.

For when you have found your Wild Service Tree you can be fairly certain that you are looking at a little bit of countryside which has remained relatively unchanged for hundreds of years.

This type of habitat is very important these days. It has achieved real scarcity value.

Naturalists do not find antiquity important for quite the same reasons as those expressed by collectors of works of art or ancient bits of furniture. However, there are similarities. Naturalists wish to preserve old, unspoilt meadows in order to gain some perspective relative to the evolution of the countryside. They also like to examine the wildlife which is interwoven, in fragile threads, into the backcloth of the countryside.

Not many people, I would guess, buy antique furniture in order to gain insight into the activities of woodworms.

The kind of ancient countryside which is home to the Wild Service Tree also houses some of the last stands of the pinkish purple meadow saffron and the lovely cowslip—rapidly becoming a rarity in some areas.

Ancient meadows represent the closest thing to heaven for many insect enthusiasts while several species of bird and mammal regard these old, undisturbed leys, as a home without equal.

You may now wish to find your own wild service tree. I can tell you little about it. It is a member of the rose family (Sorbus

by
Eric James

terminalis) and is a small tree of mixed woodlands with a leaf like that of the maple. It has white flowers and reddish brown berries which are just sweet enough to be eaten raw.

Which all leads me on, quite conveniently, to the major theme of this article.

There is, at present, a nation-wide survey being carried out to establish the range a status of the wild service tree. The exercise is being master-minded by the Botanical Society of the British Isles and the Nature Conservancy. Locally it is being co-ordinated by the Worcestershire Nature Conservation Trust Ltd. (W.N.C.T.).

You may feel, like me, that such an important piece of research should not be kept under wraps for so long. The general help of the public would be surely, valuable. After all, reports of trees are, eminently, checkable.

Unscrupulous characters who wished to make a mock of the project, and ignorant individuals who could not tell a wild service tree from a butternut, could soon be eliminated by the simple expedient of double checking on reported records.

And yet, the help of Mr and Mrs Man-in-the-Street has not been sought. The net result is that there are millions of people like you and like me who do not know that wild service trees exist.

I am sometimes forced to wonder whether it is not high time that such an important area as nature conservation was taken out of amateur hands. (And after a remark like that I suppose I should expect a heavy post bag).

The W.N.C.T. has a lot to shout about—but it seems to have been doing very little shouting.

It looks after many reserves which include some 60 acres of flooded gravel pits and flash pools at Upton Warren, where over 160 species of birds have been recorded.

Also there is the Knapp Papermill Reserve at Alfrick with its expanse of water meadows and very old mixed woodlands (including several acres of coppiced wild service trees). The Ravenshill Woodland Reserve caters for an educational need. It boasts a "Nature Discovery Centre" and displays of books, pamphlets and postcards.

The W.N.C.T. also runs study sessions at which children are especially welcome.

The W.N.C.T. seeks the support of all those in the count who are interested in the conservation of nature. The work it is seeking to do is worthy of support, and the benefits of membership are considerable—including access to many of the reserves, a copy of the Reserves Handbook, the Trust Journal, three news letters and three issues of the national Conservation Review each year. In addition there are organised meetings and summer study sessions.

Whether the trust actually deserves support, when it cannot even manage to run to an entry in the telephone directory, is another matter. It really is time that the conservation world pulled itself up by its bootstraps.

For those who will want to take advantage of the very real benefits of membership of the W.N.C.T. I have taken the trouble to discover the address of the secretary, A. W. Wells, "Fox Hill," Ullenhall, Henley in Arden, Warwickshire. Tel. Henley-in-Arden 2416.



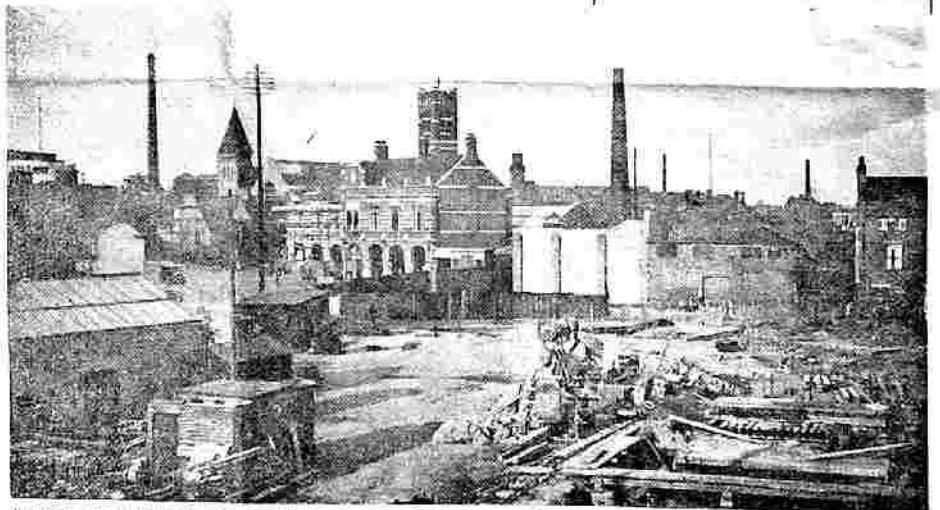
COVENTRY has been a city of change since the Second World War, but some sweeping changes were also being made before it, as these pictures from the "Evening Telegraph" files show. In 1934, demolition gangs were busy clearing an area of old property in the city centre to construct a new road—Trinity Street. Traffic congestion was a problem for the local authority then, as today.

THE CITY OF CHANGE . . .



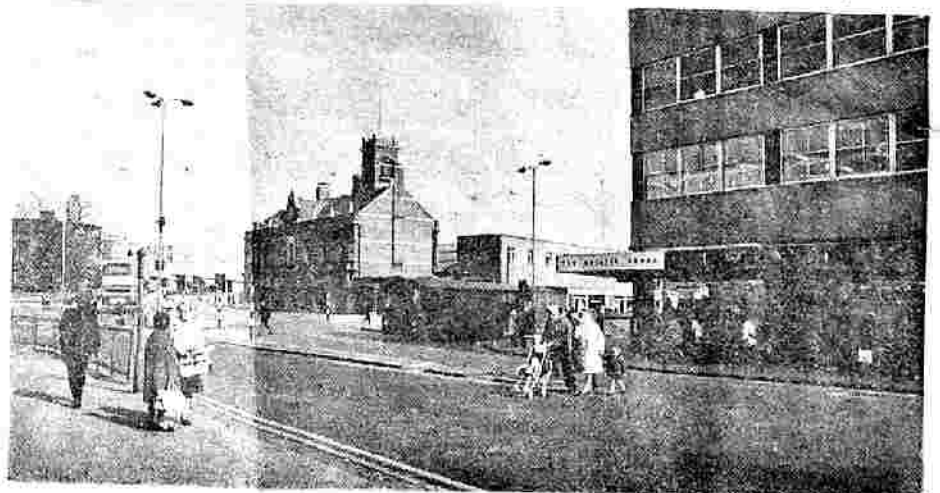
OLD buildings and cobbled ways . . . a part of old Coventry (left). But where was it? The clue is Holy Trinity Church seen clearly in its modern setting (above). Part of the front of the church can be seen peeping over the roofs of the old buildings. This was Butcher Row in 1934, looking towards Broadgate from the corner of Ironmonger Row. Butcher Row was demolished and the church then had an open vista to Broadgate.

**Fire station
-clue to the
old and new**



An unchanging landmark in these two old and new views is the central fire station, Hales Street. In the old picture (above) taken in 1934 from the corner of Ironmonger Row and Butcher

Row, looking towards Hales Street, the Trinity Hall and School of Art buildings can be seen alongside the fire station. The buildings on the right of the fire station stand at the entrance to New Buildings. (Below) the same scene today.



A HISTORY OF EVESHAM HORTICULTURE

Mid-19th century developments and experiments at Evesham

BY R. W. SIDWELL, N.D.H.

The mid-19th century was, as we have said before, a critical and important period in the development of Evesham horticulture. The railways had come and brought with them the possibility of quick transport of perishable produce to distant markets. James Myatt came to Offenham in 1852 and began large-scale market gardening on land which had previously been under farm crops. Myatt was therefore contemporary with Richard Varden, of Seaford Grange, dealt with in our last article, and he exerted an influence at least as great as that of Varden.

We will not pursue Myatt's work further at this stage but will turn our attention to Evesham itself and examine the position there at this time.

UNSYMPATHETIC

When May published the 1845 edition of his "History of Evesham" he did not think it necessary to modify his description of our industry contained in the edition of 1834. He writes:

"Gardening is . . . the staple employment of the labouring class." And continues: "The early period of life at which their labour usually begins, appears to impress their growth to middle height or under it; and although the frame is in general strongly compact at maturity, yet they soon begin to fall away and are often lame or decrepit, when it rationally worked, they would have still continued in their prime. Their wages average ten shillings weekly."

May was an Evesham book-seller and printer, not very much in sympathy with market gardening, and one can detect that slight strain of snobbishness not unknown today. He was, nevertheless, sufficiently close to the job to be able to assess the status of the market gardeners of his time with fair accuracy. His wages stated would be rather less than

these paid to labourers in most occupations. To May, market gardeners were, in fact, people of the lower orders and likely to remain so.

One of the most influential figures at Evesham at this time was Charles Randell. Randell was born on December 31, 1810. So far I have not been able to trace anything else about his early history, except that he lived at Prospect House, now more usually known as "The Elm," around 1840. By 1845, when he was a subscriber to May's "History of Evesham," we find his address given as Lendwisk. He later moved to Chadbury where he became agent for the Duc d'Anville on the Woodcote estate, and then lived on his own as a tenant of the estate. He was a man of some means, for we find that he had sunk some 20,000 in a £12,000 capital in his 500-odd acres of rented land by about 1860. His farm included about 380 acres of arable. Good deals in some length with Randell's work in his History of Worcestershire Agriculture, but there is no point in repeating his observations here. It is sufficient to say that there are a few slight discrepancies between Gault's statements and some other information which has come to hand, which I hope to resolve in the near future.

HIGHLY FARMED

Randell's farm was "wonderfully well managed and very highly farmed with aids of every description . . . an immense talent, and large capital always working on it." The quotation is from a notebook of C. H. Smith who, starting as a pupil under Randell in 1864, succeeded him as agent

on Randell's death in 1888, and was also agent for several large Cotswold estates. C. H. Smith himself is worthy of treatment in this series, but that must be for another time. For the moment we are grateful to him for some valuable information about Charles Randell and the Chadbury Farm.

Farming became unprofitable around 1875 and it is clear that Randell, originally a straight farmer and an important figure in the sheep world, took to vegetable growing as a new source of income. He was probably influenced to some extent by Myatt in this.

Mr John Haines, who was 45 years old when Randell died, remembers him quite well, and recalls that Randell was the first man he knew to grow drilled cabbage. Around 1855 he had 30 acres of this crop at Twyford on the left-hand side of the main road from Greenhill to the Lenchwick farm. Early peas too, were an important crop on this farm.

THE DEALER

The period saw the rise of a new class of trader in Evesham, that of the dealer or grower-merchant. No doubt dealers of sorts had existed from the early days, but the railways presented great opportunities for the expansion of businesses of this kind. Peas were a particularly suitable crop for dealers to buy "on the piece," and this became a common practice. Mr. Haines remembers his father, Alfred Haines, of the George and Dragon, Jewellery Street, Goo Cole, of the Vauxhall Inn, Merston Green, and Fred Watkins, of High Street, joining forces to buy 150 acres of peas at Fladbury on one occasion.

C. H. Smith gives Randell's rotations at Chadbury as follows: First-year, cabbage followed by cauliflowers; second, early peas followed by turnips; third, mangels; fourth, barley; fifth, seeds; sixth, wheat.

This would obviously apply to the lighter land only. The turnips could have been a dual purpose crop, either fed off or sold as a vegetable. Actually he appears to have clamped the crop as a rule

and sold it if the price was good enough. On January 22, 1866, he sold turnips to Fred Watkins at 2s. per ton delivered to Evesham station. This was regarded as a good price for what was, after all, only a late summer early crop.

The manural programme followed for the cabbage crop was probably copied from the Evesham market gardeners. It was as follows:

1 to 2 tons leather dust per acre ploughed in

1 ton soil harrowed into surface at planting time.

1 ton Peruvian or fish guano in two applications in March.

14 cwt. nitrate of soda in three applications (if possible) at intervals of a week or so in April (i.e. 4 cwt. per application).

The crop was usually harvested fully formed. Cauliflowers following cabbage would therefore be late summer or autumn crops. We are told that in 1881 Randell manured 16 acres of cauliflowers after cabbage as follows:

1 cwt. fish dust, worked in liquid manure, 7 cwt. per acre.

2 cwt. fish guano.

1 load of burnt ashes.

An excellent crop was obtained.

C. H. Smith makes an entry in his diary for August 7, obviously intended as a reminder:

"Drill cabbage seed second week in August and get out like swedes or mangels. Best early cabbage were grown this way 1866-7."

The following prices were ruling for fertilisers around 1870/80:

Peruvian guano, £11 15s. per ton at Liverpool plus 14s. 2d. per ton to Evesham.

Nitrate of soda, 45s. 6d. per ton.

Kill dust from Strivers & Sons, 50s. per ton at Stratford.

Leather dust (Messrs. Burdocks), 45 10s. per ton.

It is perhaps some comfort to note that the nitrate of soda was just about the same price on a unit basis as present-day nitrogenous fertilisers are, added to which present-day materials are subsidised, making them, in fact, very much cheaper. But what a change there would be today for some real 1880 grade Peruvian guano at £12 or so per ton!

PIECE WORK

Some of the piece-work rates of this period may be of interest to readers. Rates for picking:

Peshure plums, 3d. per pot.

Gooseberries, 6d. per pot.

Peas, 6d. to 7d. per pot.

Digging potatoes, 2d. to 6d. per pot. of 50 lb.

Cultivations:

15s. to 25s. per acre.

Breastploughing, 10s. per acre (1 1/2).

do turf, 25s. 6d. per acre.

Singling turnips and swedes, 5s. per acre.

Hoeing and moulding potatoes, 3s. 6d. per chain.

Planting cabbages, marked out both ways, 10s. to 14. 3d. per 1,000.

This latter rate seems high by comparison with present day standards, but the plants were more widely spaced than is the custom to day. It is hard to believe that marking out both ways was a normal practice for cabbage. Piece work rates of 1s. 6d. per 1,000 are given for savoy and Brussels sprouts.

It is hoped that the foregoing notes have given some idea of the changes in the pattern of Evesham market gardening of this period. In my next two articles I must turn to the smaller growers and see how they were adapting themselves to, and profiting from the new ideas and opportunities. We will see how Joseph Masters, perhaps the greatest champion the Evesham growers ever had, not only won legal recognition of the Evesham market, but crowned it all by being elected Mayor of Evesham for three years in succession in 1888/90, the first market gardener to hold this office. Market gardening had attained respectability little more than forty years after May had published his rather slighting words. Wealth lay just ahead.

I wish to thank Commander R. Dudley-Smith, O.B.E., R.N., for permission to use extracts from his grandfather's diary and note-books, and also Mr. John Haines for allowing me to draw on his rich fund of memories.

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The Onion goes to war

At the outbreak of war in 1939, the War Agricultural Executive Committees were set up to ensure that the best use was made of available land for food production.

Various orders were issued by the Ministry of Agriculture from time to time to control the crops grown. This involved restricting the planting of crops deemed not to be of great importance under war-time conditions, and issuing compulsory orders to increase the acreage of those considered necessary. Among horticultural crops, other than potatoes, the onion was unique as it was the only crop to which compulsory powers were applied to secure an increased acreage.

Worcestershire was, I believe, allocated about 1,000 acres of bulb onions as the target figure. As far as possible, these were to be grown voluntarily but as, for reasons we shall see shortly, the crop was an unpopular one with growers, compulsion had to be applied. Naturally, the main responsibility for growing the Worcestershire quota fell on growers in the Vale of Evesham.

The first orders for onion growing were issued in 1941 and by 1942 the campaign was fully operating.

Before selective herbicides suitable for the onion crop were available, onions required much hand-weeding. Salad onions were grown by most of the best growers but only on land which had, by years of good husbandry, attained a substantially weed-free state. The extension of onions on to weedy land created problems impossible to solve. Many such crops were lost in weeds.

Price controls, too, made life complicated. The Ministry of Food fixed a price of £25 per ton for dry harvested bulb onions. In 1943 the price of salad onions was fixed at 6d per lb to the end of May, 4½d per lb to the end of June and 2½d per lb after that.

As the salad onions were sold "as lifted" with soil attached, the gross returns per acre on a good crop lifted in late June could be three or more times higher than that obtained for a bulb onion crop kept on the ground for another two months and then dried carefully. There was a big inducement to pull the bulb onion crop in June for salad purposes and

get another crop on the ground. But bulb onions could only be pulled for salad purposes under written permit, which was granted only after inspection by the Horticultural Officer and approval by various grades of the hierarchy at Worcester.

There were many reasons why permission to pull could be granted. Stem and bulb eelworm, hitherto a rare pest on onion crops at Evesham, suddenly became serious. This was in part due to the use of English-grown seed. The normal supplies were cut off. American varieties proved unsuitable for English conditions. The heaviest crop of bulb onions were grown from home-produced seed but it proved to be liable to carry incipient eelworm infection. In due course, Methyl Bromide fumigation of seed provided the answer but this was still some years away. So eelworm-infested crops could be pulled for salad purposes. Many millions of these near-microscopic creatures were happily munched with bread and cheese and the grower was richer for their attack on his crop. Some idea of the spread of this pest can be judged from the records. In 1941, four cases were recorded; in 1942, there were 21 — and in the following year, 88.

Onions fed too highly with nitrogen would fail to bulb properly and their weight for salad purposes would be greatly increased. The less scrupulous grower found in the sulphate of ammonia bag the answer to his problems. "My onions be gone golly-necked" was a common enough complaint in these years. Five hundred weights of sulphate of ammonia per acre in mid-June is hardly the best recipe for bulb onion growing but it

grew salad onions as thick as leeks. Many an acre of potential bulb onions finished up thus and was highly profitable.

This time saw the beginning of attempts to control weeds in onions by chemicals. Sulphuric acid was the only material so far in use and long Ashton Research Station "designed" a hand barrow sprayer for operation by four Land Girls. One pumped, two operated lances, the fourth did odd jobs such as marking out ground and mixing the dilute spray. The jobs were changed around as the day proceeded. Although protective gloves were worn, the legs of the girls were covered by ordinary dungarees which disintegrated when damped by acid — which they generally were by the end of the day. It was a good plan to have a few old coats in the back of the car when taking the girls back to the hostel at night.

The acid spraying was a partial success at best, and grasses, especially poa annua, were more resistant than the onions, so that a thick sward of grass was soon produced where sulphuric acid was much used.

In spite of the problems, some good onions were grown and in the year 1943 about 2,000 tons of bulb onions were taken over from Evesham by the Ministry of Food. Unfortunately these onions were not always as well ripened as the pre-war imports and those in charge of the stores were inexperienced. Many tons rotted before they could reach the consumer.

Looking back, one wonders whether a combination of salad onions and leeks would not have been a better way of meeting Lord Woolton's demand for something to make the meat ration go further.



R. W. SIDWELL'S scheme to regain the lost 1,000 acres

should go deep enough to reach these roots. Nevertheless, a good surface tillth must be maintained.

CUTTING

Cutting not more than an inch or so below soil level should enable this job to be done by unskilled workers in less than half the time taken by highly skilled cutters at the present time. I would hope that the two double rows could be cut from one alley, but work study could determine details of technique and also the best tool to use for the purpose, although in this connection I am still inclined to favour the present Evesham asparagus knife.

When cut, the buds should be got under cover in a cool shed as soon as possible.

GRADING, PACKING AND MARKETING

I visualise three possible methods of marketing this crop. The conventional types of bundles are finished for our purpose. Select, wholly edible, tips could go through the quick-freeze trade. Attractive pre-packs, fully protected against evaporation loss, could be marketed through the normal channels. These could, if desired, be put up with sufficient firm base to allow them to be picked up by the fingers when be-

ing eaten but they should, nevertheless, be literally "ready for the pot."

Finally, it seems that the cheapest pack would be to grade carefully and to pack loose in suitable containers fully protected. Tomato boxes (12 lb.) or trays are a possibility. Some might favour larger units—say 20 lb.

Scale of activity

A scheme such as I visualise would require supporting by a good publicity campaign. This would cost money and would be justified only if large supplies were available. The first aim must be to regain the lost thousand acres. The gross value of this at the spacing suggested might be in the region of £400,000 per annum but a good deal of this would be absorbed in marketing costs. Once that target was reached, the way should be clear to expand. After all, the peak acreage was reached in the 1930s when industry was depressed. It is a poor look-out for us if we cannot do better than that now.

The scheme would call for big thinking and perhaps we have none in Evesham capable of doing this. Perhaps we should leave it to East Anglia or the Common Market countries . . . but I think it is a pity all the same.

throughout the length of the bud but rather more rapidly at the tip. The movement of water within the bud is negligible.

If asparagus is to be saved as a crop in the Vale, the time has come for some rational re-thinking; so let us take all of the points step by step, and see what we can do about it. As we should be marketing tips only, I think that all asparagus in future should be grown more or less "on the flat." The following points seem to be of the greatest importance:

SOIL

The Lias clays of Evesham produce very high-quality asparagus. I am convinced that this is the case in all other areas. The crop is grown on sandy soils, often in exposed places where driving sand storms are common. I have actually seen asparagus from certain places offered for sale carrying a coating of wind-blown sand. Such sand particles are difficult to remove from behind the bracts of the asparagus bud with ordinary washing, and gritty asparagus is objectionable at the table.

On the other hand our heaviest clay soils do present certain problems in cultivation and it may well be desirable to move on to some of the medium loams such as are found in the Budsey Series soils. Many of these are already producing excellent asparagus, but there is a very large area of land, often substantially of Middle Lias origin, which I am convinced could grow the finest asparagus in the world. It is waiting for the crop.

SPACING

Since our present inter-row spacing is determined by the amount of soil it is necessary to get over the crowns, we must not assume that we really know at the present time what the ideal spacing is; but I think we might well return to two-row beds. Perhaps a useful trial spacing would be two rows at 15 in square with 3 ft. between the double rows, giving a plant density of about 16,000 per acre. This compares with about 10,000 on many Evesham holdings, and as low as 5,000 on some of the older plantings in the eastern counties. High plant-density is one of the most important points for, as the late John Hall once remarked after visiting one East Anglian holding: "Thee wears a master lot of shoe-leather out, looking for them buds." The great man knew his job.

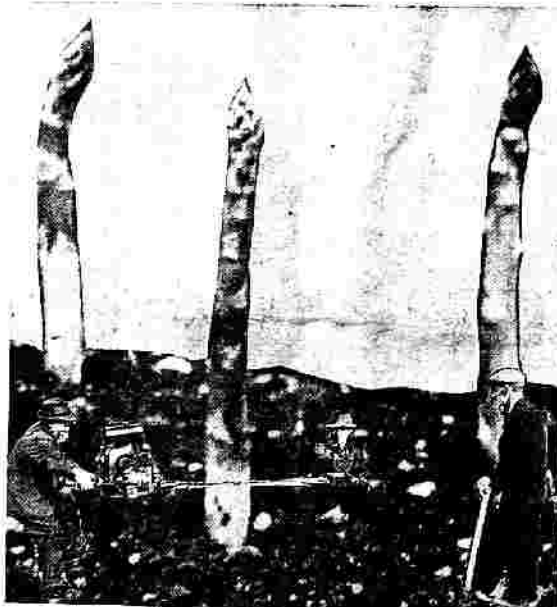
DEPTH OF PLANTING

The crowns must be deep enough to give full protection against damage by subsequent cultural operations. This may mean planting a little deeper than in the past, but it should still be possible to pull some soil back over the beds each year to maintain the required depth.

CULTIVATIONS AND WEED CONTROL

We will take these two subjects together, because they are so inter-dependent. I believe that asparagus lends itself to chemical weed control better than any other market garden crop grown here at the present time. All annual weeds can be suppressed for the season by the use of Simazin. Many perennial weeds, notably bindweed and couch-grass, can also be chemically controlled, although it would be folly deliberately to plant asparagus in soil badly infested with perennial weeds. Perennial sow thistle is our most difficult weed to eradicate and this, unfortunately, has spread widely through much of the old asparagus land.

I am quite convinced that enormous damage has been done to asparagus crowns in the past by the ordinary digging-out process. The breaking of the fleshy roots with their rich food store is a serious matter and no cultivation



ASPARAGUS FELLING, a Brocton dream—or nightmare . . .

The decimal system IN HORTICULTURE

By R. W. SIDWELL

WHAT will be the effect of the Common Market on the weights and measures system in use in horticulture? Must we envisage the market gardeners of the future calculating their fertiliser applications in kilograms per hectare? Will it be possible to bring those slightly withered nets of parsley back to weight under a decimal system by sprinkling with water?

Weights and measures have evolved to serve the needs of the community in question. As long as trading extended no further than the next village, it did not matter very much what system the next village but one was using.

One of the earliest measures used for market garden purposes was the strike, which seems to have been a bushel over a good deal of England, but could be as small as half a bushel or even as much as four bushels in some places. There are references to strikes of beans and onions at Evesham as far back as 1742. This, however, is looking backwards; we should be looking forward.

The habit of adjusting the size and type of package to the immediate needs of the time and place is not limited to the olden times. This point is well illustrated in Mr. Norbury's article in the *Agricultural Supplement* of February 23. In it he tells us that the British Standards Institution has, since 1957, standardised bushel boxes, flower boxes, tomato trays, punnets, punnet trays, vegetable crates, chip baskets and tomato baskets. He adds, somewhat ruefully: "It may well be that many of these will have to be altered again should we start exporting to the Continent."

If the decimal coinage system comes, shall we see the end of the dozen as a unit of count?

BAKER'S DOZENS

The old "baker's dozen" seems to have disappeared now from most trades. The market information columns of the *Evesham Journal* around the end of last century show that vegetables and flowers sold by count were to be in dozens of thirteen. I believe the practice probably died out between the wars. Chick hatcheries catering for domestic egg producers seem to have retained the thirteen-to-the-dozen system. I have always marvelled at the ability of these breeders to pick out a chick that is slightly below par and put it in as makeweight.

It would really be much kinder to the customer if they would wring the little beast's neck.

The change from Fahrenheit to Centigrade will ultimately be welcomed by all, once one has become familiar with it. The Fahrenheit scale was based on a scientific miscalculation. The Centigrade (more correctly, Celsius) scale has long been in use in this country for scientific work and for industrial processes. Many people have had to carry the two scales in their heads. The sooner we forget Fahrenheit the better. We have got to learn to *think* Centigrade and not to have to translate it into Fahrenheit before it means anything.

IN BOOKS

The main landmarks are simple enough; 0 deg. C. is freezing point and 100 deg. C. is boiling point of water at normal air pressure. Comfortable room temperatures lie between 15 deg. C. and 20 deg. C.; 30 deg. C. is uncomfortably hot. I hope that articles and books giving temperatures for glasshouse crops will switch over to the new scale. We will soon get used to it.

On the subject of land measurement, the Evesham gardeners have a huge laugh on everyone. I do not know anywhere else in Britain where the square chain, one-tenth of an acre, is the unit of small land measures. From mediaeval times, acres, roods and perches have been generally adopted, and for legal purposes are still in use even in the Vale. Only on Ordnance Survey maps does one find the decimal system in official use. What could be simpler than the square chain? The length of a cricket pitch squared and we have 0.1 of one acre!

This reminds me of an incident in the war years when I was entering some acreage details on an official form, using the decimal point before the number of square chains. An old gardener was watching me and said: "Decimals don't make sense to we. We allus works in chains!"

I do not know when the chain came into the Vale as a unit of land measure, but it certainly should be universally adopted. A change-over would probably meet with strong opposition from the legal profession and estate agents, but there would be enormous advantages ultimately. Will anyone join me in a national campaign to have the Evesham system generally adopted and thus ease the lives of future generations of school children?

Pollution

The risks in horticulture

By R. W. SIDWELL

Pollution is fashionable at the present moment. It is good to find that we are at last becoming aware of the folly of our reckless mode of life. Words like "ecology" and "environment" have become part of the everyday language of ordinary people instead of that of a special group of academic scientists working in a quiet back-water of human knowledge.

Pollutants are a product of "advanced" societies. Nature can cope with the waste products of primitive peoples and sparse populations. The rise in the standard of living is inevitably associated with an increase in waste per head of the population. We might define a high standard of living as the capacity to buy a packet of crisps instead of having to use fresh potatoes. It is a sad anachronism that, as the standard of living rises the quality of life declines.

But how does all this affect horticulture? The anti-pollution lobby usually have two main targets in their criticism of growers of food crops, fertilisers and spray chemicals. They are often hearkened to together and treated as one and the same thing by the ignorant who constitute a vociferous, though ill-informed, minority of the anti-pollutionists. Indeed one such man wrote a novel based on the effects of organo-chlorine fertilisers. Whatever chemists may have done, they have certainly not invented anything like that yet.

Storage

There are problems connected with fertiliser usage, but they are quite different from those of crop spray chemicals. The nutrients that plants take in from the soil are mostly ions of simple chemical compounds. This is true whether the nutrients come from natural organic residues, naturally occurring minerals or modern concentrated fertilisers. All that the fertiliser does is to supplement that which is there naturally.

Provided attention is paid to the importance of

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nutrient balance and the need to make good natural deficiencies, no harm will come from the intelligent "normal" use of fertilisers. Unbalanced manuring may lead to susceptibility to disease, but correct manuring can lead to some measure of resistance. It is the job of the modern soil chemist to see that fertiliser usage is adjusted to give optimum response. Experienced growers know instinctively what this level is.

Nitrogen

Since nitrogen provides the most spectacular increase in growth, there has been a tendency to over-apply this element and there is evidence that nitrates can be harmful to animals, including man, if eaten in excess. Most of the nitrogen taken in by plants is in nitrate form but this is converted into proteins and related compounds fairly rapidly and this constitutes an important part of the animal food which plants provide. The trouble seems to come from large quantities of unelaborated nitrates. This situation arises only during periods of exceptionally rapid nitrate uptake by the plant.

A greater pollution threat arising from high levels of fertiliser application is the raising of the concentration of dissolved salts in our waterways through drainage loss from agricultural land. Since horticulture has the highest level of fertiliser usage the drainage losses are higher. The problem here is not easy to solve. Some fanatics blame "chemical" fertilisers, but whatever system of manuring is adopted, whether it be wholly organic or otherwise a high level of fertility means a high level of drainage loss. This seems to be inevitable. By maintaining the land in a cropped state as much as possible, some leaching is avoided. And using the most soluble fertilisers sparingly and only when a crop is in a condition to take the fertiliser up is a good practice, but beyond that there is little to be said.

Another and often more serious source of salts in our watercourses are the sewage works. For many years it has been accepted that perfection of sewage processing has been reached when the effluent has been fully mineralised, in other words when the organic matter has been converted into simple mineral salts. The attainment of this state together with the elimination of certain harmful bacteria is the ultimate aim of sewage processing. A discussion on the future of sewage disposal lies outside the scope of this article. For the moment we can say that agricultural land drains and sewage effluents both contribute to the high salt levels in watercourses, lakes and reservoirs. This condition, often associated with pesticides pollutants, may give rise to algal bloom and other undesirable conditions. This problem will certainly get worse unless there is a radical change of approach to the problem.

When we turn to crop spray chemicals, we find a very complicated story. Unlike fertilisers spray chemicals are not "natural." Plants cannot live without their mineral nutrients, but they could live very much better without spray chemicals if they could stand up to the competition. Spray chemicals are used on

crops to remove competition of three main kinds: (i) weeds, (ii) fungi and bacteria and (iii) insects and other animals. A large range of materials has been developed to deal with each of these three. They are now so much part of the normal pattern of crop production that we attempt to do without them would be like expecting modern medical science to get along without drugs.

Spray chemicals come in all colours. Some appear to be quite harmless, a few extremely dangerous, many have unexpected side effects, most are imperfectly understood. Some of the side effects are surprising. Among herbicides, an extraordinary situation has arisen with the material paraquat. The concentrate is extremely poisonous. If drunk.

There is nothing remarkable about that. Plenty of quite common materials are poisons but most of them are instantly distasteful. Paraquat apparently is not. In use, paraquat is one of our least harmful spray chemicals. It is rapidly inactivated on reaching the soil and is of little harm to wild life.

Tragedies

Yet this material has caused many deaths and illnesses through being drunk in mistake for Coco-cola or some such article. The latest of these to come to my notice follows the formula pattern. An employee of a large public authority stole some of his car in a Coco-cola bottle. A friend, after working hours, drank from the bottle and was off work for six months. The authority was held responsible for allowing the material to be stolen and compensation was paid. We live in a strange world.

Many pesticides are more

insidious than paraquat. The organochlorines, once thought to be absolutely safe and sold without any form of restriction, have slowly come under a cloud. Dieldrin, aldrin and heptachlor are now very severely restricted in their use and D.D.T. is following the same way. What a wonderful material D.D.T. was when introduced about 30 years ago. Absolutely safe. Not like that dangerous lead arsenate which it replaced. Wisdom is an expensive thing to buy. We have bought our knowledge of the organochlorines dearly and we have learned too late. Perhaps I might be allowed to sound a final critical note on these materials. Much of the impetus to get their use restricted came from our friends in the blood sports. The salmon fisheries were threatened by sheep dip effluents, game birds by cereal seed dressings and even foxes were being poisoned by eating pigeons which had collected large doses in their bodies. Apparently pigeons can accumulate organochlorines without harm to themselves.

One of the main difficulties with biological control in our intensive monoculture systems is the high degree of pest control called for. Biological control works well in a natural woodland. Here a balance is struck. Each organism has its own little bite but nothing gets the complete upper hand. Commercial crop production is quite different. The official apple grading scheme, for instance, requires absolutely blemish-free fruit for top grade. Growers cannot earn a living unless they get somewhere near this level of perfection. Biological control cannot hope to give this consistently and we are committed to heavy and complicated spray programmes, constantly changing as some pest or other develops resistance to certain materials.

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LOOKING BACK

Market prices over the years

From the files of the 'Evesham Journal'

PRODUCE AT EVESHAM MARKETS	1897	1907	1917	1927	1937	1947	1957	1966
BRUSSELS SPROUTS JANUARY	3s 5d - 4s 6d per pot	1s 4d - 2s 5d per pot	5s 6d - 7s 3d per pot	2s 10d - 3s 10d per pot	1s 3d - 3s 3d per net	12s - 15s per net	7s - 11s per 20 lb.	7s - 10s per 20 lb.
PARSLEY FEBRUARY	2s 9d - 5s per pot	2s 4d - 3s 2d per pot	14s - 16s per pot	5s - 5s 3d per pot	2s 6d - 4s 8d per doz.	—	4s - 5s 6d per 10 lb.	8s per 5 lb.
GILLIES MARCH	7d. - 8½d per doz.	6d - 8d per doz.	—	—	6d - 1s 5d per doz.	—	5s 9d - 6s 6d per doz.	6s per doz.
SPRING CABBAGE APRIL	2s - 5s per pot	5s 3d - 5s 9d per cwt.	5s 6d - 6s 9d per pot	1s - 2s 3d per pot	3s - 3s 9d per crate	27s - 28s per crate	1s - 2s per crate	9s per doz.
ASPARAGUS MAY	1s - 4s 3d per 100	1s 3d - 1s 9d per 100	1s 6d - 3s 6d per 100	1s 6d - 3s 6d per 100	3s 6d - 6s per 100	8s - 12s per 100	15s - 17s per 100	24s per 100
LETTUCE JUNE	6d - 1s 3d per pot	1s 4d - 1s 6d per pot	4s - 6s 6d per pot	6d - 1s 9d per pot	1s 3d - 2s 5d per doz.	4s - 8s 6d per doz.	8s - 13s per doz.	2s - 7s per doz.
STRAWBERRIES JULY	4d per lb.	1½d - 3d per lb.	1d - 7½d per lb.	3d - 9d per lb.	3d - 8d per lb.	—	1s 2d - 2s 3d per lb.	1s - 2s per lb.
ONIONS, Green JULY	1d - 2d per doz.	1¼d - 2d per doz.	1s - 5s per doz.	1s 9d - 2s 10d per doz.	3s - 6s 6d per doz.	1d - 2¼d per lb.	1s 9d - 2s 3d per lb.	2s 6d - 3s 6d per doz.
RUNNER BEANS AUGUST	6d - 1s 2d per pot	3s 3d - 4s per pot	4s - 5s per pot	8s 6d - 9s 6d per pot	1s 9d - 3s 3d per pot	4s - 7s per pot	1s 3d - 1s 7½d per lb.	8d - 9½d per lb.
PLUMS, Pershore AUGUST	9s 3d - 11s per pot	1s 7d - 2s per pot	7s - 10s 6d per pot	17s 6d - 19s per pot	2s - 3s 6d per pot	15s - 17s 6d per 72 lb.	3s - 3s 9d per 12 lb.	8s - 10s per 12 lb.
TOMATOES SEPTEMBER	1½d - 3d per lb.	1¼d - 3¼d per lb.	3¼d - 4d per lb.	1½d - 2¾d per lb.	1s 3d - 2s per 12 lb.	5s - 7s 6d per 12 lb.	4s - 6s per 12 lb.	8s - 14s per 12 lb.
CARROTS SEPTEMBER	1s 2d per cwt.	3d per bundle	3s 6d - 5s 6d per cwt.	2s 6d - 4s 6d per cwt.	2d - 4d per doz.	14s 6d per cwt.	6s - 8s per 28 lb.	—
CAULIFLOWERS OCTOBER	2d - 6d per doz.	5d per doz.	3d - 2s per doz.	1s - 2s 6d per pot	2s - 3s 6d per crate	6s - 15s per crate	6s - 9s 6d per doz.	6s - 10s per crate
CABBAGE NOVEMBER	3½d per doz.	1s per doz.	2s - 3s per doz.	2s per net	3d - 9d per doz.	7s - 10s per net	2s 6d - 6s per doz.	5s - 8s per crate
PARSNIPS DECEMBER	1s 5d - 2s 1d per cwt.	1s 9d - 2s 1d per cwt.	6s - 6s 3d per cwt.	3s 6d - 5s per cwt.	6s - 8s per cwt.	10s - 16s per bag	5s - 6s per 28 lb.	6s per 28 lb.

Changing fashion in vegetables

By R. W. Sidwell

New cults arise from time to time. Old cults are revived.

Recently we have seen renewed interest in home food production. Radio, television and the popular press have all made their contributions. These have ranged from "How to grow chives in a Chelsea window box" to "Pigs and potatoes in the Welsh hinterland." One particular television programme about a man who, it was claimed, had become a trend-setter in self-sufficient smallholdings led one to think that he would make more money out of television than the land. It might be argued that the object was not to make money but to live. But the two are inseparable. Self-sufficiency can never be attained without efficiency standards that would compare with good commercial production.

Vegetable growing in spare time in the garden or allotment is in a different category. Here it is not a case of leaving the office and taking to the land as a full-time occupation. Market gardeners sometimes view with concern the effects of home food production on the demand for their produce. When it comes to main crop vegetables there may be cause for concern but those growers relying on early, out of season, crops probably have little to fear. Few amateurs are capable of contributing much in these more highly skilled and specialised fields.

One effect of the upsurge of interest in home vegetable growing is to give a boost to the seed and sundries trade. I am informed that sales

have risen considerably more than the increase represented by inflation. Of some of the gadgetry foisted on the unsuspecting amateur the less said the better. On the subject of seeds, however, it can be said that modern strains are greatly improved and, in comparison with other things, are well worth the prices now charged.

As a general rule our tastes in vegetables are conservative but occasionally something sparks off a new trend. The American invasion of the last war made sweet corn a common vegetable and it has remained with us as one of the best of summer luxury vegetables. It is one of the vegetables that is perhaps best grown in the private garden for it is much better eaten fresh. Calabrese was an uncommon vegetable until the advent of deep freeze. Now it is known to most gardeners and is bought by housewives as frozen sprouting broccoli.

Some of the efforts to produce and popularise new vegetables are amusing. The garden beet, perpetual spinach, sealake beet, sugar beet and the mangel are all forms bred from the same original wild plant. Many years of careful selection produced the bright red garden beet that seemed to be wanted, though who decided that red beet was better than yellow I have never been able to discover. Similarly sea-kale beet was bred to have that pure white midrib. Sugar beet were bred white for obvious reasons while mangels

remained a nondescript reddish or yellow because, for stock feeding, colour did not matter much. A few years ago an American breeder decided to transfer the red colour of garden beet to sealake beet, a simple enough exercise in genetics, and produced the ruby chard which differs from ordinary sealake beet only in colour. As most of the colour comes out in the cooking there seems little point in having it there in the first place. Now — triumph upon triumph — the same breeder has given us a golden beetroot, a character that centuries of breeders did their best to get rid of. I wonder if future gardeners will wonder why we grew the red beet for so long.

One thing not always appreciated is that the leaves of all of the above beet crops make a good spinach substitute indistinguishable from each other, yet only one of them is grown for this purpose and red beet leaves are almost always sent to the compost heap.

One of the casualties with the passing of years has been the true seakale. Once a feature of all "gentleman's gardens," it is now rarely seen. Seed appears to be unobtainable. It is a perennial crop, propagated by root thongs. Blanching was done in the old days under seakale pots, large earthenware bells with a lid on the top. The same pots were also used for forcing rhubarb. Seakale should come back again where pigeons make ordinary spring green stuffs impossible. Blanching is easily done under black polythene.

Another crop which the amateur (and professional) has almost forgotten is the Jerusalem artichoke. In this year of potato shortage it has been particularly welcome. Even those who grow this crop often do it badly. Beds are frequently left down for years on end. This crop should be lifted annually and replanted at a spacing of 3ft x 1½ft. The crop does not keep well when out of the ground so it should be lifted as required from November to April. Because of its tendency to shrivel it is not a popular vegetable with the greengrocer although some of the more enterprising sell it. Similarly seed merchants find that it unprofitable to offer planting sets because of the high wastage. The old purple form seems to be out of cultivation. The strain I grow is a good white one without the pronounced smokey flavour I remember in my youth.

Efforts have been made to establish the soy bean as a vegetable in Britain but it is not for us until, at least, strains suitable to our climate are produced.

Many of the so-called "unusual vegetables" are unusual because they have a limited appeal as many growers discover after trying them for the first time. Those hoary old times, salsify and scorzonera, still survive in the catalogues yet few people to whom I have spoken like them. Celtuce made its appearance a few years ago and can still be bought and the Chinese shungiku seems to be an acquired taste.

LOOKING BACK

Market Prices of the Century

From the files of the "Evesham Journal"

PRODUCE AT EVESHAM MARKETS	1914	1924	1934	1944	1954	1964	1973
BRUSSELS SPROUTS JANUARY	3s. 4d.—4s. per pot	6s. 6d.—9s. 9d. per pot	4s. 6d.—5s. 3d. per 40lb.	10s. 6d. per cwt.	5s.—8s. 9d. per 20lb.	5s.—8s. per 20lb.	30p.—70p per 20lb.
PARSLEY FEBRUARY	3s. 6d.—4s. per pot	9s. 3d.—10s. 6d. per pot	3s.—6s. 3d. per pot	3s.—6s. per 20lb.	10s.—11s. per 10lb.	14s. per 5lb.	15p.—40p per 5lb.
GILLIES MARCH	5½d.—10d. per doz.	9d. per doz.	8d.—2s. 5½d. per doz.	5s. 6d. per doz.	6s. per doz.	6s.—7s. per doz.	—
SPRING CABBAGE APRIL	8d.—11d. per pot	7s.—9s. 6d. per pot	3s. 6d.—4s. 6d. per crate	6s.—9s. per doz.	7s. 6d.—9s. per crate	8s.—10s. per crate	40p.—80p per crate
ASPARAGUS MAY	1s. 9d.—2s. 6d. per 100	3s. 6d.—4s. 6d. pr 100	3s. 6d.—7s. 6d. per 100	4s.—18s. per 100	15s. per 100	13s. 6d.—14s. per half hundred	70p.—90p per round
LETTUCE JUNE	6d.—1s. 4d. per pot	1s. 6d.—3s. per pot	9d.—3s. per 4 doz.	6d.—4s. per doz.	3s.—5s. per doz.	1s. 6d.—3s. 6d. per doz.	25p.—55p per doz.
STRAWBERRIES JULY	1d. per lb.	2d.—5½d. per lb.	4d.—8d. per lb.	1s. 0½d. per lb.	1s. 6d.—2s. per lb.	1s.—2s. 6d. per lb.	5p.—10p per ½ lb.
ONIONS, Green JULY	1s. 8d.—2s. 2d. per doz.	2s. 6d.—5s. 9d. per doz.	1s. 6d.—10s. 9d. per doz.	2½d. per lb.	6d.—9d. per lb.	2s. 6d.—4s. per doz.	10p.—25p per doz.
RUNNER BEANS AUGUST	5s. 9d.—6s. per pot	6s. 9d.—7s. 9d. per pot	7s. 9d.—8s. 9d. per 40lb.	10s.—13s. per 40lb.	6d.—7½d. per lb.	3½d.—6d. per lb.	5p.—7p per lb.
PLUMS, Pershore AUGUST	4s. 3d.—5s. per pot	27s.—40s. per pot	1s. 6d.—3s. per pot	Controlled price	4s.—6s. per 36lb.	537 per ton	50p.—60p per 12lb.
TOMATOES SEPTEMBER	1d.—1½d. per lb.	2d.—2½d. per lb.	1d.—4d. per lb.	Controlled price	5s.—15s. per 12lb.	6s.—11s. per 12lb.	40p.—70p per 12lb.
CARROTS SEPTEMBER	2s. 8d.—4s. per cwt.	2s.—3s. 6d. per cwt.	1s. 6d.—2s. 9d. per cwt.	11s. per cwt.	2s. 9d.—3s. 6d. per 28lb.	5s.—8s. per 28lb.	25p.—35p per 28lb.
CAULIFLOWERS OCTOBER	3d.—2s. 6d. per doz.	1s. 9d.—3s. 6d. per pot	6d.—1s. 6d. per crate	5s.—7s. 2d. per 40lb.	2s. 6d.—5s. per crate	7s. 6d.—15s. per crate	80p.—£1.50 per doz.
CABBAGE NOVEMBER	4d.—1s. 2½d. per doz.	1s.—1s. 6d. per doz.	6d.—1s. 2d. per doz.	1s.—2s. per doz.	5s. per crate	5s. 6d.—7s. per crate	40p.—70p per crate
PARSNIPS DECEMBER	2s. 11d.—3s. per cwt.	2s. 6d.—4s. per cwt.	2s. 10d.—3s. 9d. per cwt.	9s.—10s. 6d. per cwt.	4s.—5s. 6d. per 28lb.	6s.—9s. per 28lb.	40p.—50p per 28lb.