Gardening for Pleasure and Profit

FIRST OPERATIONS IN THE HOME GARDEN

Soil Preparation May Begin as Soon as Ground Is Mellow and Hardy Vegetables and Flowers Planted—Cold Frame Valuable for Protection from Weather Changes Rather than for Heat Afforded.

THERE is no question but that under favorable weather conditions some outdoor planting of vegetables and of flowers may be done in Minnesota in March in favorable years, but April may be taken as the normal planting time out of doors, and the work done before tnat is exceptional. Owing to the light, porous quality of the soil work can begin here earlier than in some warmer localities, for it is only a few days in a well-drained locality, after the frost is fairly out of the top layer of garden soil, before it is dry enough to work easily without becoming sticky.

Those who delight in getting the hardy things into the ground at the first suggestion of spring should plow or spade the plot for early planting in the fall, leaving only the pulverizing and fertilizing for spring work. Indeed, the sweet-pea trenches and a small plot for the earliest small-growing vegetables may be completely prepared in the fall, and, with nothing to do but stir the surface to loosen it and to mix in a little fine compost or concentrated fertilizer, a very early start is comparatively easy. For those who have made this preparation, planting may begin the first balmy day. In addition to sweet peas this should include at least one flower, the poppies, and these must be planted where they are to remain if the results are to be thoroly satisfactory. They cannot be planted too early, for they like a cool, moist soil, and both peas and poppies can safely pass thru a hard freeze after planting, and most seasons can remain in the ground all winter without damage.

Among the vegetables that may be safely and profitably put into the ground as soon as it is mellow and fine are early peas, lettuce, spinach, cress, mustard, dandelions, radish, onions—either seeds or sets—cabbage, parsley and kohl rabi. Salsify, carrots, parsnips, beets and turnips may soon follow, and as soon as the ground has warmed a little, a few hills of early potatoes and some of new and hardy corn varieties should be put in.

Use Fertilizers Liberally.

There is such a thing possible as an excess of fertilizer causing all kinds of plants to run too largely to vegetation instead of fruit and flowers, and both the expense and trouble of getting and handling the fertilizers make this fault one scarcely to be considered, and it is safe to advise putting all the available, well-rotted manure on the garden, especially the vegetable garden. Some coarse manure may be put on and spaded or plowed in deep, but this will yield scarcely any plant food the first season, except to a few deep-rooted plants, its use being to conserve the moisture of the soil, an important consideration with the sandy loam of Minnesota. The manure that is to be worked in as a topdressing must be well rotted and fine.

In the cleaning up that precedes or accompanies the soil preparation of the garden, one of the most troublesome questions is the disposition of ashes, wood and coal, and for lack of appreciation of their value in the garden many people pay heavily to have them hauled away in order to be rid of an unsightly and unmanageable heap. Instead, both should be returned to the soil. Both may be used in the compost heap where they are thoroly mixed with other valuable fertilizing materials, but coal ashes may be spaded in around trees and clumps of shrubbery growing in the grass to keep the soil loose, while wood ashes that have been protected from moisture make an invaluable plant food stirred into the soil lightly just before seed sowing or subsequent cultivation, and is particularly useful in feeding the lawn, which is always crying for more and rich food.

Commercial fertilizers are both valuable and useful and many are obliged to depend largely on them. They should be applied as the soil is being given its final cultivation previous to planting, but should be well mixed in so as not to come in direct contact with the young tender roots, for these preparations are strong and burning. These fertilizers furnish the most quickly available food and for that reason are valuable for early crops, but manure will be more useful to those coming on a little later. Manure not only furnishes plant food, but it increases the power of the soil to hold moisture and keep it light. The kind of commercial fertilizers to be used depends upon the soil and also on the crop. The nitrates stimulate stem and leaf growth and are therefore valuable for the lawn, pot herbs or greens, lettuce, asparagus and rhubarb. Nitrate of soda and sulphate of ammonia are those in most common use. Potash gives brilliancy and size to flowers and increases the quantity and quality of fruit. It is applied chiefly in the form of muriate and sulphate of potash and wood ashes. Phosphoric acid also aids the production of strong, plump seeds.

The Useful Compost Heap.

For the small garden the chief dependence should be put on a liberal dressing of manure well worked into the soil, supplemented by fine compost. The compost heap when rightly understood and managed is a blessing both to the housekeeper and the gardener and its use would remove all need of an annual cleaning up of the yard in the spring and would solve the garbage collection problem, for there would be neither ashes nor kitchen refuse to be carted away and the householder could dispose of all refuse, except possibly tin cans and broken crockery, with ease and profit to himself. Everything that will rot, including woolen cloth, can go into the compost heap, which should be placed out of sight of the house or well screened from it. If possible it should have for a foundation a layer of sods to keep the valuable plant foods from washing away into the soil. If it is under cover so much the better, and if not, the top layer should always be as nearly impervious to water as possible. Two heaps are better than one, as they may then be used for two purposes. Sods, leaves, weeds and lawn clippings sprinkled with earth will give a light porous soil, valuable for potting plants and making flower beds. Manure and kitchen refuse should go into the other heap and when decomposed will furnish rich food. The garbage and manure must be covered with soil to prevent its decomposition from becoming offensive. Both piles should be worked over frequently, breaking up the lumps and pulverizing the compost.

Whatever of manures or fertilizers are to be used in the garden should be ready for application as soon as weather conditions will permit, which should be between April 8 and 15. Next week should be devoted to getting those, completing the plan for the garden and ordering whatever is lacking, at least for the April planting. The asparagus bed should have its dressing of salt sprinkled on at the rate of half a pound to a square yard and either manure or nitrate of soda, one ounce to the square yard. Rhubarb should also have the soda. Another application of soda should be made in three weeks.

Using the Cold Frame.

It would hardly be profitable to undertake to make a hotbed now, for it would be nearly two weeks before it would be available, but now is just the time to begin the use of the cold frame, and that can be made ready in a day's time. The construction of both are the same or may be, the difference being in their management. The hotbed is made with raw manure underneath, which in the process of fermentation generates a great deal of heat. The cold frame has no such internal heat; it merely protects the plants from the elements and by conserving the heat of the sun and soil, keeps a fairly equable temperature. The heat of the cold frame may be increased if desirable during the next few weeks by banking it with fermenting manure. Its heat may be maintained fairly well by banking it well with soil and by covering it with old carpet or matting cold nights and windy, raw weather.

Into the cold frame should go whatever is wanted early that will stand transplanting, and especially all plants with fine seeds that are likely to be injured by wind or the drying out or hardening of the ground. It is even more valuable as a protection from the roughness of the elements at this season than as a protection from cold. Its space being limited, it is also possible to provide a rich and congenial soil and carefully regulated supply of moisture, in which to give plants a vigorous and quick start.

What to Plant in Frames.

In the cold frame should be started cabbage, cauliflower, tomatoes, egg plants and peppers (where these are not already growing in the hotbed), lettuce, celery, onion seed, parsley, kohl rabi and Brussels sprouts. Several plants that will not stand having their roots disturbed in transplanting, which can be managed in the frames with gratifying results in early crops are corn, cucumbers, squashes, lima beans and melons planted in strawberry baskets or cardboard cases than can be removed and planted basket and all. Practically all flowers that can be transplanted are better for the protection of the cold frame or covered seedbed, but those most desirable to give an early start are asters, nasturtiums, pansy, alyssum, daisy, lobelia, ageratum, pinks, ten-weeks stocks, calendula, zinnia, nicotiana, annual phlox, candytuft, snapdragons, marguerite carnations, cosmos, salpiglossis, verbena, celosia, columbines, cobea, salvia, and most of the perennials and biennials, many of which will have a limited period of blossoming the first season, when given an early start.

SUCCESSFUL POPPY GROWING

To Secure Good Results, Seed Must Be Planted Early.

The secret of successful poppy culture lies in the early sowing of the seed. The plants are so hardy that the earliest flowers are always borne on plants from self-sown seed that come up in autumn and winter over, without other protection than that given by the mantle of snow. Consequently, one need not fear to plant too early.

Poppy seed may be sown in early spring, scattering the seed thinly in rows about a foot apart. These seeds are so small that it is desirable to mix them with cornmeal or fine sand before sowing, and thus be able to distribute them more easily and evenly. If the seed is scattered in a tiny furrow during a light rain, or the furrow is sprinkled from a watering pot after sowing, it will need no more covering than will thus be obtained. Deep covering is one of the dangers to be avoided. After the plants are up they may be thinned from time to time, only enough being left to cover the soil surface without crowding. In the northern states seed sown in early spring will blossom in June and July, remaining in bloom for several weeks.

Easily Grown Flowers.

The national bureau of horticulture, thru its press committee, discussing some easily grown flowers for the amateur, says:

"The beginner should try to grow a few varieties of flowers and learn their habits thoroly, for in thoroness lies success. He should not construct a garden in fancy out of the highly-colored plates in a seed catalogue, and expect to produce it in reality. But he should choose his plants with regard to the place he will grow them and study their needs carefully.

"Sweet peas are deservedly popular, because of their ease of culture, profusion of bloom, dainty colors and delightful fragrance. Plant them in good garden soil, fertilized well with rich manure, in rows perfectly running east and west. Keep the flowers well picked each day to prevent seed pods forming, for, like pansies, the vitality of the plant is impaired by the production of seeds. The seed should be planted early in the spring, in trenches three or four inches deep, being covered only a little at first, and the trenches gradually filled as the plants grow.

"Few persons are acquainted with the merits of the gaillardia, or blanket flower, which is a hardy perennial and blooms in the summer in great profusion. It is about a foot high and has good stems for cutting. For an old-fashioned garden the new hybrids of French marigolds and zinnias, larkspur and fringed petunias are exceedingly beautiful and furnish a wealth of bloom for cutting."

A Plant Marvel.

Every year I grow at least one plant that is a triumph of nature, if not of art. I have an old-fashioned stoneware churn that is urn-shaped, and it is cracked enough to allow drainage, therefore it has become a flowerpot. In the spring, when danger of frost is past, the churn goes out into the yard, and into it goes some kind of a thrifty begonia. Besides watering, I then give it no care at all. By fall the plant, in size and shape, resembles a bushel basket, and the leaves are as large as one's hand.

Visitors marvel at that plant in the churn. Is there magic in the churn? I think there is, two or three kinds. First in its size; it holds soil enough to feed such a gross eater, and it does not dry out quickly—a common drawback in using small plant jars. Most of the magic, however, is in the soil. It is no pack of dirt, suggesting a brick by its hardness, but a mass of light, loose material, almost like the inside of an anthill in the woods; a compound of nature's choicest refuse. The bulk of it is leaf mold; not more than one-third is black mold, well-seasoned with charred bones (a quart is not too much) and a sprinkling of charcoal and wood ashes.

The Strawberry Bed.

If the plants were allowed to run over the entire strawberry bed last summer, paths or walks must be cut and the plants turned under or used for setting new beds. Young plants with clean, white roots, may be used for planting from these beds, tho, perhaps, plants taken from beds not intended for fruiting may be preferred. A plant of medium size with an abundance of roots is better than a large plant with few roots.

The mulch should be drawn from the crowns of the plants as soon as freezing weather is over, and trodden down between the rows; do the work while the mulch is moist. Get down on the knees, draw it from the center of two rows, and press it firmly under the knees. Should the bed be very weedy, it may be best to remove the mulch entirely, cultivate, clean up thoroly, and replace between the rows just before the blossoms begin to open. In a wet season or with a very wet soil, the latter treatment may tend to a coarse growth of plant and little fruit.

Repair the Trellises.

As soon as the frost is out of the ground, posts and stakes of the raspberry and grape trellises may be set upright, the wires put up and the canes tied in place. Wires are much better supports for all kinds of vines than slabs, as the tendrils of the grape and trailing vines will support themselves without much tying. When vines are used for covering buildings or verandas, it is better to carry the wires ten inches or a foot away from the building. The vines will grow better and the woodwork will be less injured.

Mustard for Garnish.

Parsley as a garnish has a wide reputation, but few people know the value of the curled mustard leaves. Their mild flavor is agreeable alone or with lettuce. The leaves are often curled to the depth of an inch, making an attractive bit of green for the table. Mustard grows so rapidly that with two plantings, separated by a few weeks, four crops may be raised, the last one growing late in the fall. It is a rapid spreader, and after the first year needs no sowing. Do not plant where it can crowd out more delicate plants. Mustard is even more acceptable as a pot-herb or "greens," than for garnishing or salad.

ROSE'S HOME IS HERE

NEW PINK BLOSSOM CLAIMS MINNEAPOLIS AS BIRTHPLACE AND IS NAMED "MISS KATE MOULTON."

THE KATE MOULTON ROSE.

The rose "Miss Kate Moulton" is a new pink rose that is now being disseminated all over the country by the originator, John Monson, proprietor of the Minneapolis Floral company. It is a true tea hybrid, with the fragrance of its illustrious parents, Mme. Testout, La France and Belle Siebrecht.

It was about seven years ago that Mr. Monson first hit upon the right combination, and now he can realize that years of patient labor are well rewarded.

The "Miss Kate Moulton" is in a class by itself in size of bloom and luxuriance of foliage. It is also a free bloomer, as it has averaged the originator more than any other rose grown in his greenhouse. It averaged last year forty-nine flowers to the plant, the greater per cent being on stems 20 to 36 inches in length. The foliage is a dark green, about as heavy as American Beauty.

This rose is very easily grown; it is very robust, and has never been affected by disease of any kind. It has been grown in all conditions, and has done phenomenally well under all circumstances. Mr. Monson has wintered it with fine success, even in this rigorous climate. This is a marked point in its favor, making it a practical outdoor rose, as well as a fine rose for greenhouse cultivation.

The keeping qualities of this rose are something remarkable. It has been shipped to the Atlantic and Pacific coasts and the Gulf of Mexico and arrived in perfect condition at all points, and has even been awarded certificates of merit, and carried off the medal after traveling that distance. Mr. Monson has hosts of letters of commendation from all over the country where it has been exhibited, each letter bringing out some new point in the excellence of this particularly excellent rose. He has already sold in the neighborhood of 75,000 plants, not only in the United States, but to different parts of the world.

During the past three years, it has been handled almost exclusively in the retail trade by O. C. Swanson of Minneapolis and Holm & Olson of St. Paul, and both of these firms avow that it is impossible to sell a Bridesmaid or Chatenay when the Miss Kate Moulton is on the counter, and neither of these stores can supply the demand for it.

The Minneapolis Floral company's range of glass now contains about 120,000 square feet, and is the largest in their section, and Mr. Monson is contemplating adding about 35,000 feet more this coming summer. It is fully equipped with all the modern requirements of greenhouse establishments, and speaks well for the push and energy of the man behind it.

Eight years ago three young English university men decided to start a laundry that should be a model in its processes and work, and they succeeded. Recently they opened an exhibition of their achievements in Bond street, where it is hoped it will make a proper impression upon the "smart" London women who have been sending their lingerie and laces to Paris to be dealt with.

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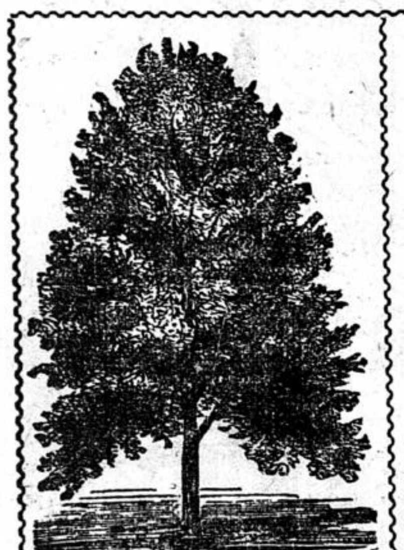

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