

# The HOME BEAUTIFUL

## Flowers and Shrubbery

### Their Care and Cultivation



Specimen Polypodium Mandaianum.

### THE WINDOW GARDEN

By EBEN E. REXFORD.

It may not seem reasonable to the reader to treat of winter window gardens in midsummer, but a careful consideration of the subject from my point of view will convince the flower-loving person, I feel quite sure, that this article is "timely."

Look over the window gardens of your neighbors, in winter, when they ought to be at their best to give the fullest degree of satisfaction, and I think you will find the majority of them far from satisfactory.

The plants will be small, much too small to be ornamental; and if you keep an eye on them throughout the season you will find that few of them reach the flowering stage before March, which is to say that most specimens in the ordinary house collection of plants give few or no flowers at the period when a window garden should afford us the greatest amount of pleasure.

What we aim at is flowers in winter—not in the spring, when the blossoms of the outdoor garden are at hand.

Said a woman to me, not long since: "I don't see why it is that I can't have flowers in the winter. Some of my friends have, and they don't take half as good care of their plants as I do. Why, some of them don't repot their plants at all, still I notice they have flowers from them; and I go over all my plants just before winter sets in, and repot them and cut them back or start new ones and take pains to give them the best soil and am so careful about watering, and fertilizing, and airing, but most of them will not blossom for me. They look healthy and they grow well, but one doesn't care for just leaves.

Now, this woman's failure to obtain flowers from her plants was explained by three words she made use of—"just before winter." The attention she gave the plants at that period came several months too late.

The fact is, as anyone will readily see when they come to think the matter over, a plant cannot be satisfactorily developed in two or three months. Not much can be expected from a plant that is not made ready for winter until that season is about upon us.

In order to secure a good collection of good-sized plants for the winter, one must begin to get ready during the summer. By the term "good-sized," I do not mean large plants in the usual

sense of the word, but rather plants of sufficient development to justify one in expecting flowers from them for the holidays.

Age is often a more important factor in plant culture than mere size. Young plants seldom bloom while development is taking place most rapidly. They must "get their growth" so to speak, before we can expect them to bend their energies to the production of flowers.

Therefore, I advise the owner of a collection of house plants from which she wishes to secure flowers all through the winter season to get the plants under way now. If some of them are large, cut them back and allow them to renew themselves wholly, as to branches, during the months between now and winter.

Report now, if necessary, and shift such as seem to need larger pots. If young plants are to be used, procure them at once and keep them going ahead steadily.

Do not be so anxious to secure rapid development that you fall into the error of overfeeding. Simply aim to bring about a strong, healthy growth, and as long as a plant seems to be making such growth do not make use of the fertilizers.

It is one of the hardest things I know of to make an enthusiastic amateur plant grower satisfied to "let well enough alone." She is constantly wanting to urge her pets on a little faster, and in her efforts to do this she gives them more food than they can digest, and the consequence is a breakdown from overstimulation nine times out of ten.

A plant that does not get as much food as it can make good use of, will give vastly greater satisfaction in the long run, than the plant that gets so much food that it doesn't know what to do with it.

Some persons are under the impression that all plants for winter use must be young ones. Such is not the case, however. Year-old plants, as a general thing, are much preferable to the young ones.

There are exceptions as in the case of Chinese primroses, Primula obconica and others of a habit similar, in some respects to our annuals; but for the majority of plants adapted to house culture like geraniums, heliotropes, begonias, abutilons, asparagus in variety and carnations, older plants should always be chosen.

This summer I start the geraniums which I intend to depend upon for win-

ter flowers a year from the coming winter. These will bloom some this winter if I let them, but I shall hold them in check to a great extent for future service.

The person who preaches "young plants for winter flowering" to you does not take into consideration the fact that a plant started this season from a cutting will have but few branches by winter, and a plant that has but few branches cannot give many flowers because ample flowering surface means many branches.

Therefore, instead of letting the geraniums you start this summer blossom in the winter, keep pinching them back to produce a sufficient number of branches to give the desired amount of flowering surface.

The more branches there are the more flowers you may expect.

Cut your ferns apart now and use each division of the roots that has a piece of crown attached as the basis of a new plant. Use leaf mold or turfy loam for this class of plants, if obtainable.

Hanging baskets should receive attention at once.

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