THE PROPER CONSIDERATION OF LAWNS AND GARDENS: BY C. A. BYERS

"A display of good judgment among the planners of homes," a successful architect once said to the writer, "is comparatively rare. Occasionally we find the man, or the woman, who intends having a home built, possessing thoroughly good predetermined ideas—that is, general ideas for the working out, by us, of the entire home, the grounds as well as the exterior and the interior of the house. But in the majority of cases the most that the prospective builder does is to outline in his mind some crude architectural style for the house alone, usually patterned after the home of some neighbor. And worse still, he thinks only of expending all of the sum of money that he has set aside for home building purposes upon the carrying out of some particular style, with no thought, apparently, of the interior furnishing or of the fixing up of the surrounding grounds. I believe that every architect should have a fair, if not a thorough, knowledge of landscape gardening, or at least that he should work in conjunction with someone who has. I would then advise the client to divide the sum that he contemplates expending upon his home by five, three-fifths of the sum to be used for the building proper, one-fifth for furnishing, and the remaining one-fifth for the gardens."

This may be expressing the case rather strongly and setting too rigid a rule for the monetary disbursements, but no doubt the architect, to a great extent, was right. There is too marked an inclination on the part of home builders toward the neglecting of the house interior and the house setting, particularly the latter. A well designed home signifies more than a well built house. To convert a house into a real home, its interior must be tastefully finished and furnished and its surroundings should embrace appropriate lawn and garden work. The proportioning of the expenditures, however, should be made according to the total amount to be expended, the style of the house to be built, the special location selected and the various other conditions that affect the undertaking.

The first glimpse of a home afforded to the visitor or passersby reveals the exterior appearance as a whole, and from this a very lasting impression is usually formed. The house itself may be well built and architecturally attractive, but unless the surroundings are well planned and pleasing the impression created is certain to be far from flattering to the builder's taste. A house without an artistic setting, without an appropriate lawn or garden with flowers and trees, or shrubbery of some kind artistically arranged, is like a picture without a frame.

In planning the building of a home, either humble or grand, one should ask oneself if it would not be better to build a slightly smaller or less elaborate house and so be able to put a small portion of the money into lawn and garden work? The expenditures for fixing up the grounds, which should be governed by the location and other conditions, need not be large, especially if one can do at least a part of the work oneself, but every builder of a new home should make some provision for the immediate laying out of a lawn and garden. And every spring thereafter the grounds should be given renewed attention.

No set of rules for gardening can be devised. Successful landscape gardeners, in so far as their work consists of designing is concerned, are born—not made. The most that I can do toward devising rules for lawn and garden designing is to prescribe a number of don'ts—and to let the accompanying illustrations serve as pictorial suggestions. A common mistake among flower lovers who become amateur gardeners is the planting of a conglomerate mixture of colors with no realization of what its collective appearance must be. Here apply the first don't. One color in a single border creation is far better and prettier than half a dozen colors; and one color, say, for instance, a scarlet geranium, with an enclosing row of something like
the “dusty miller” makes a simple border scheme that no conglomeration of colors can equal. For circular beds more colors can of course often be used with good taste, but the colors for such spaces should be carefully selected. There is always more danger of having too many colors in any flower plot than too few.

In the matter of tree and shrubbery planting more freedom is allowed. The kinds and number used, however, should be governed by the size of the ground plot, the location and the general character of the landscape. The grounds of city homes are usually limited in size and the arrangement of flowers and shrubs must often be such as give the place an appearance of primness. The city home lawn should be kept mown, the trees well trimmed and the flowers and shrubbery in prim condition. The rear garden in the city, however, is not subject to such rules and therefore individuality may here be given greater exercise.

It is the country and suburban homes that offer to the gardener the widest appreciable opportunities. Here he may have creations of every kind—flower-bordered walks, arbors, lily ponds, gnarled and picturesque trees, shaded nooks, pergolas and rustic seats,—everything arranged to suit his own fancies. The grounds may be rugged or level and prim, and designed with no thought of their having to conform with those of the other homes on the street. There are ways of arranging the garden to suit the architectural style of the house, and to create such a harmony should be the gardener’s object. The garden should be as simple as is possible for the every-day home, and, of course, tastefully arranged—in some certain order, so as not to have the appearance in general of being only a conglomeration of various kinds of trees, shrubbery and flowers. Other rules for the laying out of the grounds cannot well be given.

It should be the object of the gardener to plant hardy and long-blooming varieties of flowers, with due consideration as to color combinations, and the planting should be done, in most cases, as early as possible after the frosts. Give the soil proper attention, seeing to it that it is well enriched with manure and that it is occasionally loosened around the plants. Rose bushes and other shrubs that have stood in the garden during the winter should also receive attention of this kind in the spring.

A nice lawn and garden enhances the appearance of any home many times, and the work of gardening affords outdoor exercise and to most persons gives much pleasure. From Bacon’s essay on gardens is taken the following: “God Almighty first planted a garden; and, indeed, it is the purest of human pleasures, it is the greatest refreshment to the spirit of man, without which buildings and palaces are but gross handiwork; and a man shall ever see that when ages grow to civility and elegance, men come to build stately, sooner than to garden finely; as if gardening were the greater perfection.”
A RUSTIC PERGOLA OF THE SIMPLEST CONSTRUCTION, HIDDEN BY ROSES IN JUNE AND GRAPES IN AUTUMN.
Gardens for simple houses should be simple, but planned with a sense of order and an appreciation of the value of color.

"There are ways of arranging a garden to suit the architectural style of the house."