VIOLET GROWING FOR THE MARKET: BY MARY EVERTON

About sixty miles southwest of London there is situated within half an hour's moderate walk of a steadily growing fashionable watering place, one of those old-fashioned hamlets so frequently to be found in the beautiful county of Sussex. In the midst of these surroundings two young English women bought three acres of freehold land with the intention of establishing a permanent home, and cultivating the land so as to give them a sufficient income to render them free from monetary troubles in old age.

With the aid of a competent and artistic architect they planned and built a cottage containing on the ground floor one large room, one small one, a kitchen and pantry, upstairs three bedrooms, bath and lavatory. The building is of brick faced outside with white rough cast. All the woodwork, including beams, doors, stairway, is of English elm left unpolished. The whole is simply but comfortably and interestingly furnished. A flower garden, lawns and shrubbery are in close proximity to the cottage, over which roses in great profusion and creeping plants climb.

Life at "The Cottage" is a very busy one. The day's work in summer beginning between 4 and 5 A. M. and in winter about 7 A. M. About two acres and a half of the land belonging to the cottage is utilized in the cultivation of violets for the market. The work attending the successful development of this flower is exceedingly laborious though interesting and remunerative. It requires unremitting attention and personal supervision.

The beds are prepared with the greatest care, being thoroughly weeded and manured as well as kept clean and sweet by perpetual hoeing and removing all dead leaves from the plants, which are placed some twelve inches apart and must be kept free of runners. Some of these beds are fifty by eight or nine feet, arranged so that sweet peas can be planted between them through the summer; while others, somewhat smaller, are arranged with walks between of the same width, which are used each alternate year for the violet beds.

This method gives the ground rest and is therefore economical. During the heat of July and August each plant must be syringed every night and morning; this work alone amounts to many hours of labor in a nursery of any size. Artificial shading is often resorted to on account of its being better than trees, which are apt to make the ground too damp, in which case mildew frequently sets in and destroys the crop. Muslin run on wires fastened to posts at either end of the bed and placed at an angle to throw the greatest amount of shade possible is the most approved method of artificial shading. Cuttings in order to increase stock are constantly being taken. These are dealt with in various ways, being put into furrows, frames, pots or houses.

A violet house, 100 feet by 18 feet, is built like an American carnation house, the roots are planted in raised benches. After the violets are taken out at the end of April to be put into the open ground, the house is cropped with tomatoes and melons so that at no time of the year is it useless or idle.

The frames are placed on beds of manure and during the winter nights are covered with Archangel mats to guard against frost.

A pathway hedged by violets and sweet peas leading to "the cottage."

These are easily removed during the sunny hours, for violets require plenty of light and air, and also a certain amount of sun. Both rats and mice will get into violet frames and eat the roots, therefore they must be promptly exterminated should they appear—snails, slugs and caterpillars are also the violet grower's enemies. These are
A violet house belonging to "THE COTTAGE." destroyed in a great measure by the birds, especially by robins and thrushes, but a grower does well to visit his frames after dark in a winter's evening and collect any slugs he may find, destroying them at once with salt, carried in a pail into which the pests can be thrown. The salt destroys them immediately. To the production of good violets purity of air is an essential.

Various kinds require varying soils. A good violet must have a clear color, good scent, be of a large size, have a long stalk and be a perfect bloom. In color the flower may be violet which is decidedly the most popular, claret, pale blue, rose, yellow or white. The busiest time for the grower is from the beginning of October to the end of April.

There is always a great demand for this flower and good blooms invariably fetch the grower's own price. They are sold in boxes from $1 to $10 and sent to all parts of the United Kingdom. Clumps are sold in autumn for winter and spring blooming and in spring the rooting cuttings are sold for flowering the ensuing year. Sometimes, too, there is a demand for leaves only; these are used medicinally in case of eczema and cancer.

Great care is taken with the gathering and packing to ensure the flowers reaching their destination absolutely fresh and in good condition. The flowers are picked into large baskets as near the time of shipping them as possible. They are at once taken to the packing house where they are sorted, bunched and put into great bowls of water, care being taken that no water gets onto the petals. They are then packed as compactly as possible into lightly made wooden boxes, made especially for this purpose; these are addressed and stamped ready for posting.

Orders too large to go either as letter or parcel post are sent by passenger train and are delivered without delay. Those sent by the outgoing morning post arrive in London the same day, while those sent into the provinces reach their destination the following day. Should a surplus of blooms be gathered, they are put into a cold, air-tight chest where they will remain as if freshly gathered for an indefinite period.

The varieties which are grown in this prosperous Sussex nursery are the following:

Single blooms: Princess of Wales, Kaiser Wilhelm, La France, Luscolme, Admiral Avilon (claret), John Raddenbury (pale blue), Rose Perle (rose color), Semper Florens (Flowers in summer), Boston.