HOW GARDEN WALLS CONSERVE THE HOME FEELING: THEIR PICTURESQUE AND PRACTICAL VALUE: BY ALICE LOUNSBERY

FEW years ago there raged in America the widespread desire to tear down all fences and boundary walls and to blend the domain of neighbor intimately with that of neighbor. Lawns were encouraged to extend without interruption until touched by the public sidewalk; the postman, tradespeople, children and dogs walked across and about them ad libitum. Even the owners of large estates disclaimed the advantages of high surrounding walls and placed their houses and gardens where they could be seen and supposedly enjoyed by every passerby. The English custom of shutting in parks and castles and gardens from public view was descried in America as selfish and undemocratic.

Today when many Englishmen have torn down their walls and abolished hedges generations old in an attempt to imitate our lack of domestic reticence, a change has come over the sentiment which formerly prevailed here. It may perhaps be owing to neighbors' dogs, to their children or even to the paths worn by postmen across various lawns that a universal desire seems to prevail for the protection given by walls. And the walled garden, the walled estate, the terrace wall and the fruit wall are finding their way into plans of the American landscape gardener.

This is perhaps because walls are capable of being not only structures of great convenience, but also objects of decorative value. Still America is young in wall building, especially in those that are beautiful. Time with its softening touch must pass before even the most satisfactory of the newer walls can have the mellowness and the air of blending with the landscape that is noticeable about English walls, to say nothing of those along the Mediterranean, the land of walls—rugged and brilliantly decorated.

Walls of field stone which were the early and seemingly indigenous ones to America were made in part to assist the farmer or country landowner in clearing up his fields. Building materials at that time were costly and the landholder wisely made use of the stones lying about his acres, doing so in the same spirit that the early settlers used logs for their cabins.

The walls he made, however, many of which are still standing especially in the New England States, were usually thrown together in a more or less careless way, the stones being piled without exact fitting, without mortar or other binding material. In consequence they were likely to break away and to roll down after those scaling the wall intent on making a short cut across fields. Yet these early, low stone
TWO VIEWS OF A FINE BRICK WALL IN KENT, ENGLAND, LEADING TO THE GARDEN WHERE MRS. BURNETT TAMED AND LOVED "THE ROBIN," OF WHICH SHE HAS RECENTLY WRITTEN.
AN OLD BRICK WALL BLENDED INTO THE LANDSCAPE BY THE PLANTING OF MANY ROSES.

STONE WALL ALONG A ROADWAY PLANTED HEAVILY AT THE TOP WITH VINES AND SHRUBS.
Steps and terrace wall having at the base a border of hardy perennials and at the top a line of bright-colored planting.

Rough stone wall planted thickly with perennials able to thrive in the soil of its spaces.
THIS WALL OF ROUGH STONE SHOWS ALONG ITS FACE SEDUMS AND OTHER ROCK-LOVING PLANTS GROWING WITH EVEN MORE LUXURIANCE THAN IF THEY WERE IN A GARDEN BORDER. THE CRAMPING OF THEIR ROOTS HURTS THEM NOT AT ALL, WHILE THE WALL GIVES THEM THE WARMTH AND PROTECTION THEY SO GREATLY DESIRE.
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walls had a dignified appearance and when they were covered with native vines, which sought them as a support, they lent to the landscape a rude grace.

It is probable that native stones will remain one of the materials largely used in America for walls although brick has an old and indisputable place and concrete has now as well a strong hold. In fact, the latter material seems in many places to have given a new impetus to wall building.

Brick walls have inevitable distinction and when of soft colors they make one of the most pleasing backgrounds for flowers. The accompanying photograph of a garden wall in Kent, England, shows a way in which bricks can be laid at the top of the wall so that soil placed between them, gives to plants the opportunity to extend their roots and to hold the bricks as firmly together as could be done by mortar. The reason that brick walls are not more general in this country is owing to the exceeding high cost of laying them.

Many of the newer concrete walls are clean looking and impressive, but to live up to their possibilities they should be treated with vines and blooming things. Vines have already made a good showing on many American walls, but the charm of vivifying brilliant bloom is still far from them. To see walls with flowers growing from their sides, to scent the fragrance they exhale and to have the eye fairly dazzled by their splendor, one must turn the steps to that sun-ridden strip of land bordering the Mediterranean, famous for its flower-bedecked walls as for its villas, its soft, dulcet atmosphere and its smiling, care-free people. There the walls are as characteristic as the civilization. They are moreover useful, giving to the landscape both dignity and beauty. No holder of land however limited in area is content without his surrounding wall marking off his possessions assuring him seclusion and the opportunity for peace.

The greater number of walls along this strip of country are made either of native stone or of a composition material, mellowing with the atmosphere and taking, as it grows old, soft tones of pink and buff. Usually a coping of flat stone, a railing or architectural feature in the way of a vase or ornament marks the tops of these walls; again their upper line is broken only by flowers clambering over them from the top downward or stretching upward from the base. Sometimes they are so covered with bloom, as in the rose wall at La Mortola, Italy, that the material of which they are built is lost to sight.

Although it would be futile to attempt to reproduce, especially in the northeastern States of America the same decorative brilliancy of walls that is found along this southern sea and in various other places.
of the Old World, on account of climatic conditions, it is something that could very readily be done in parts of the South and West and even in States having severe winter climate for at least a part of the year. Indeed a great deal of planting has to be done in order to become effective during the summer months. The use of evergreens as a substitute for the palms and cacti of semi-tropical climates would give them besides color in the winter, abetting their stalwartness.

There are several ways of planning for the floral treatment of walls. The general American habit has been to plant vines at their base and to train them upward. Along the Mediterranean the most noticeably beautiful walls show flowers and vines planted along their top and allowed to hang downward over their surface. This latter is the highly pleasing method and especially to be desired with retaining walls or those placed at the foot of terraces.

The attractiveness of floral decorations hanging over walls instead of climbing up from their base is undeniable, in fact, so enchanted with this arrangement have visitors to the Mediterranean become that they have endeavored to produce similar effects at home, even to the extent of placing along the top of their walls, boxes filled with earth in which plants might be grown. Again vines have been planted at the base on one side of a wall, trained upward and allowed to hang down on the opposite side. This treatment is advisable when a wall has been built that has no attractiveness in itself, and when it is desirable to transform it as speedily as possible into a green boundary line.

The concrete walls without niches of any sort are not possible to decorate with the many flowers that can be grown on stone walls. Their surface can best be softened by planting them at the base with vines and training the growth upward.

Walls of rough stone can be constructed, as those herein photographed, in which intervening gaps are filled with earth so that seeds sown or plants set into it can stretch their roots until they find a firm anchorage enabling them to endure the intense suns of summer and to hold fast through the blasts of winter. In decorating a wall with blooming plants the lesson the American cares to learn is to do it abundantly. The walls of the Riviera appear as if the whole of Paris had strewn its artificial flowers over them. And the made-up flowers of Paris are world famous. They are so perfect that they appear real, and the flowers of the Mediterranean walls are so flawless that they seem to be artificial.

Roses, great, full and beautiful such as the Marechal Neil, La France and Killarney, cover these walls of the sunlit south, form-
ing one of its dominant beauties. They stand as trees beside them, make festoons over them and hold as it were the wall in their embrace. The fine old brick wall shown in one of the reproduced photographs is so blended into the landscape by roses that it appears to partake of their brilliancy and charm. In the northeastern parts of the United States, rose growing on walls has barely been attempted; but of late, with the many new varieties propagated from the rugosa and wichuraiana stock, both hardy as weeds, the field has opened for such work with a promise of success. The Cherokee rose of the South has decorated many fences, clambering over them with an apparent spirit of revelry, enshrouding them, covering them with its fair white blooms. But unfortunately the range of this free-growing trailing rose is somewhat limited. It is in the province of hybridizers, however, to produce one that can take its place in the northlands.

Roses after all are the acme of desire in wall decoration. People of more simple, even more practical taste can well content themselves with using for this purpose perennials of tested value, annuals that are cheery and bright and with vines that have proved their merit.

Among perennials are found the Sedums, live-forevers, of which there are several varieties that do well in poor, shallow soil. They have a snug compact habit blooming in soft pastel colors—pink, white and yellow, and give the appearance of sitting on a wall. *Sedum acre* is one of the best, as its habit is spreading and moss-like and its yellow flowers numerous. A most beautiful addition to a wall on which a good foothold of soil can be had is the bleeding-heart, *Dicentra eximia*. It comes from the Alleghany Mountains, its leaves being as exquisite as those of any fern, its rose-colored flowers piquant in appearance and occurring all summer. It is related to the Dutchman’s breeches of the woods, also a good wall plant requiring little soil, but with a season of spring bloom too short to make it of much service.

Self heal, *Prunella Webbina* with flowers crimson purple, and evergreen candytuft, *Iberis sempervirens*, showing pale white flowers in trusses are both adaptable to wall decoration. *Helianthemum perfoliatum roseum*, a comparatively new trailing plant with single flowers of salmon pink, is worthy a trial on a wall, as is also sand-wort, *Arenaria Montana*, an evergreen trailing plant, dense in its foliage and covered in spring with white flowers. The sea-pink or thrift, *Armeria maritima laevicola*, should do well in such planting, while gold dust, *Alyssum saxatile compactum*, exquisite in bloom and leaf, is attractive at the top of a wall built to form a terrace. The crab cactus has been planted and thriven on a rough stone wall on Long Island, giving to the whole planting a semi-tropical appearance. In fact many of the perennials associated with rockeries can be grown as well on walls,—
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that is on stone walls having niches supplied with a reasonable amount of earth. The determination of rock-loving plants is very great.

ANNUALS hold their own in decorating a wall and require a small outlay of either money or labor. Sweet alyssum known principally in America as a garden border plant does well if once well sown and established. It endures until the time of frost. Along the Mediterranean it is one of the most conspicuous bloomers on walls, occurring there as a wild flower. The pastel blue ageratum forms a good companion-flower, since its color is soft and the plant unmindful of intense heat and drought. Its seeds need to be sown where soil has accumulated or some plan been made for its growth.

The climbing nasturtiums are decorative in many places, their flowers being strong in color and many-toned. On the whole, however, people prefer to plant their walls with perennials which endure from year to year, rather than with annuals that have to be resown each season.

High fences almost deserving the name of walls are now designed to be covered entirely with native vines, traveler’s joy, Clematis Virginia, the Virginia creeper, sometimes called five-leaved ivy, bittersweet and others. For such a purpose a costly fence is not necessary. Posts and rails, the former being of some architectural design are serviceable, while rough stone walls are inevitably good for the purpose. The point is that the wall will be so completely covered with vines that it is likely to be very little seen. The so-called Japan ivy, Ampelopsis Veitchii has been used to cover many walls, being a vine of brilliant greenness in midsummer and turning to rich red and russet tones in the autumn. No vine moreover can be found better able to cling by its fine rootlets to stone and concrete surfaces. Honey-suckle, Lonicera Japonica, gives forth in June, a subtly sweet fragrance; Clematis paniculata sends out clouds of fleecy white bloom in September. The wall on which this vine grows should be unquestionably a wall. It is too heavy for a light fence.

Unless very skilfully conceived, walls are not satisfying when in themselves ornate. The materials of which they are made gives little inspiration in the way of decoration, while their primary purpose that of portraying boundaries seems to demand clear, straightforward lines. Through their quality of durability, however, they can become apparently pleasing planting grounds, accepting the softening beauty of flowers as naturally as if they were the unchanging side hills, the rocks of the woodlands or some rough-hewn bank.