SMALL VISTAS IN AND ABOUT THE HOME GARDEN: THE ART OF FRAMING LANDSCAPES: BY ALICE LOUNSBERRY

With the home garden, the garden of ideals and dreams, the vista is as closely associated as is the steeple with a New England church. Indeed the vista directs and controls the range of the eye, carrying the mind to fields beyond, with somewhat the same intent that the church steeple points the thoughts Heavenward. The vista stirs, besides, the imagination through its ability to lay hold of and to close in a bit of Mother Earth, setting it apart as a picture.

Natural vistas are inspiring to even lay minds unopen to the possibilities of tree boughs, the seeming consciousness of vines, and the beauty of certain architectural features. The direct appeal of many woodlands comes perchance with a natural vista produced by the arching boughs of trees, a rough path beyond and a glimpse of sky above. In fact to plan for vistas, small ones about the house and garden and larger ones where broad fields and extensive landscape views can be controlled, is a salient art of the landscape gardener knowing well the value of restricting, in certain places, the range of the eye.

Tall gate posts, besides their desirability to hold a gate and their ornamental worth, have frequently an added vista value in the way of definitizing the path of entrance, shutting it off from the surrounding landscape. Thus they give often a picturelike outlook. At one of the conspicuously beautiful places bordering Long Island Sound, one where the entrance is in the rear of the property, there can be seen a gate-post vista of extreme attraction. Its posts terminate on either side a high severely plain concrete wall, covered heavily with vines. In construction they also are very plain like square columns with flat copings on their tops. No gate hangs between them. They simply stand as a side frame to the landscape picture which they confine, directing the eye across the road, over a flat marshy meadow, then up to meet a slight elevation covered with ragged, dark-looking pine trees, interspersed now and then with scrub oak. In itself this view is not particularly lovely, that is,—not until it is seen from between the gate posts when its too extended range is limited and the quality given of a picture. It then becomes poetic on days when overhung with mists; brilliant when touched by sunshine or autumn foliage, and at twilight tender, unusually distant and melancholy. Artists have sat between these gate posts perpetuating the view on their canvases. It seems to inspire them because they see it first from between the posts. Before their erection, no one noticed the beauty or the artistic quality of this particular strip of outlaying country.
PLANNING VISTAS IN HOME GARDENS

A DIFFERENT kind of gateway vista is shown in one of the accompanying illustrations. One more near and simple could scarcely be imagined. The gate appears as a hinged part of the picket fence, the supports for the vine-covered arch being free from ornamentation. In this instance the decoration is provided by the vine, which forms the vista through which one looks from the house into the garden, and toward the house likewise when in the garden.

Primarily the sensation of passing through a gate is pleasant. It opens up expectancy. A gateway supplemented by a vista, even one so simple as a vine trained over it arch-wise, does moreover a service in framing for the eye the scene which stretches beyond. It uses its power to eliminate and simplify, and leaves what it does not reveal to unfold by degrees, thus carrying in its wake the zest of personal discovery.

A distinctive architectural feature, especially an arch can be so set as to encourage admirably a vista view. The simple and beautiful arch standing at the foot of steps in a terraced garden at Salem, Massachusetts, gives to the surrounding ground its most poignant charm. As one descends these steps the arch discloses a vista into the garden to which its own beautiful outlines give character and expression. Together run grace and charm in this pathway while a result is gained that could have been given by few other ornamentations. This arch stands as guardian over an old, well-grown garden, its peonies and irises holding at a time myriads of blossoms. It can be stated also that this arch gives its most lasting impression from a point midway on the steps where its full value as a vista is appreciated. It is shorn of the usual decoration of vine or creeping plant and is constructed of material far from costly. It relies for beauty entirely upon the simplicity and purity of its outline, and forms moreover a most dignified landmark able to draw interest toward the garden.

At places where ground about the country home is limited, it is of especial importance to provide for a vista which encloses a pleasing view of the neighboring property, an open range view, planned through the lot at its greatest depth, avoiding, however, its exact center. Sometimes a vista can be contrived to extend from the middle front of a lot, to one of its extreme rear corners. Such a one while apparently simple should be nevertheless skilfully devised that a sense of novelty and distance may be cast over the property while taking from it any element of conventional stiffness.

Vistas invariably endow a place with an appearance of greater size than it actually possesses. For this reason even miniature ones are desirable on small places, their ability to direct the eye over a chosen landscape being naturally their elemental value. When well con-
A DISTINCTIVE ARCHITECTURAL FEATURE WHICH FORMS THE PROMINENT VISTA OF A TERRACED GARDEN AND HOLDS ITS OWN AS A TIME-WORN LANDMARK.
A ROMANTIC OLD GARDEN WHEREIN THE VISTAS ARE MADE BY THE BoughS OF TREES.
AN OLD HOUSE OVERGROWN WITH VINES AND ENHANCED WITH VISTAS THAT MAKE IT SEEM FAR FROM THE BUSY STREET ON WHICH IT STANDS.
A SIMPLE GATEWAY VISTA INCREASING THE PLEASURE OF ENTERING THE GARDEN AND FOCUSING THE EYE ALONG ITS CENTRAL PATHWAY.
RHODODENDRONS COMPOSING A RADIANT PICTURE WHEN SEEN VISTA-LIKE AGAINST THE GRAY STONE BACKGROUND OF AN OLD CHURCH.
A low vista formed by an overgrown box hedge, giving to the garden an appearance of much greater extent than it actually possesses.
PLANNING VISTAS IN HOME GARDENS

structured they give, even in its oblivion, the impression of open country on either side and plead with the onlooker to forget all irksome boundaries.

In the wonderful gardens of the Mediterranean, gardens which average much smaller in area than those of America, the device of the vista is used in full measure. Often the eye is led in slanting fashion across a greensward, after which a clump of natural planting is passed until it rests in viewing a summerhouse, a fountain, a curved bench or water basin. The surprise of a vista is then its most potent charm.

Sometimes the trees in a garden form its vistas, changing with the viewpoint of the beholder; while some line of planting may be used to extend the impression they produce. In the garden picture showing a tangled mass of old plants, following more or less their own will, the area is seemingly extended by lines of well-grown box and by trees forming natural vistas. Pruning shears have been little used. What probably was once laid out as a formal Colonial garden has now become a tangled garden of much sweetness, wild and free in its way.

A house on Chestnut street in Salem, Massachusetts has at the rear where it appears to be imbedded in vines, much of the vista feeling. The strong, powerful-looking leaves of the Dutchman’s pipe transform the steps of the back porch into a vista point, while the free planting of vines, ferns, flowers, shrubs and trees about the house gives it an air of restfulness and seclusion seldom seen about those standing as this one, on a busy street. None of this vista impression is formed with extraordinary plants, just the most generally known shrubs and trees being used. It even seems as if these vistas had been fostered by accident rather than by preconceived planting. They illustrate the unexpected miniature vistas which belong to small places.

Certain trees have long been associated with the power to form vistas. The American elm with its fine foliage, its intersecting Gothic lines, and its habit of growth, coming up like a fountain and terminating in a fine, spray-like crown, is one of the most generally approved for this purpose. The Lombardy poplars can be planted to stand like a frame to some distant picture showing a glimpse perchance of water over-ridden by the high moon. Again the cedars looming conspicuously against brighter colored foliage are used by landscape gardeners to form vistas which often appear as if consciously planned by the wisdom of Nature.

Trees like the weeping larch, the weeping Norway spruce, the weeping beech, all of which are a bit eccentric in their manner of
throwing out branches, are admirable to choose for the construction of distant vistas to shut in pictures of snow and ice, those akin to beauty in somber, classical outlines. In truth the home-builder should endeavor by every intelligent means at his hand to compose through pleasing combinations of form and color, pictures for the winter landscape as well as for the more sympathetic seasons of flower and leaf.

The vista of one of the well known American gardens is formed by two trees guarding its entrance, trees seen somewhat less clearly in the accompanying photograph than in reality. These trees are veterans, their lower boughs making a vista that is repeated by their crowns. Still in this garden it is the old trees that give it from various angles the vista sentiment. They prevent moreover the house from standing as a whole in plain view, affording instead, a glimpse of it here, another there. They soften its outlines and hold it in the center of the picture. A large circular bed, box-edged and filled with peonies stamp by their arrangement the garden as one not of yesterday nor today, but rather as one more than a century old.

Among vines, such well known members as wistarias, trumpet creepers, honeysuckles, roses and clematises are favorites long tried and beautiful with which to form simple vistas. In winter when they become almost skeletons much of their beauty is shed. It is then the support on which they climb that must hold the vista impression. For this reason it should be well constructed.

Such large powerful plants as rhododendrons make wonderful pictures when framed in vista-like by an overhanging bough. They even pale the lights and shadows of art pictures and outshine the largest bouquets ever conceived. They are worthy a frame, no other outburst of bloom comparing with them in combined delicacy and gorgeousness.

By many it is thought that the vista par excellence is the one leading to a glimpse of the sea. Such a one should be boldly constructed for the sea is a force, a great power, a sight of which is limited better by the broad sweep of a tree bough than by any construction of vine-like delicacy. But all home-builders do not live near the sea, while many have in their vicinity a lake, a pond, even a tiny stream in which can be found perchance the inspiration for some one of the many forms of vistas.