BLOSSOMING FRUIT TREES AS DECORATIVE FEATURES OF OUR LANDSCAPE: BY ALICE LOUNSBERY

WHEN Nature blooms, her children smile, for her radiance reaches far and her beauty is undeniable. The lesson she sings is one of universal joy, a pæan of cheer to the human heart. Year after year, she repeats her miracle. The oldest, most weather-beaten tree renews in the springtime its youth, its blush becoming fair as that of the youngest maiden. Side by side it may stand with a more perfect tree, but when the first tremor of spring passes over it, it thrills with the same eagerness to express itself as is shown by its young neighbor, vibrant from root to tip with throbbing fresh sap. This instinct to express, to bear and to mature is shown by the outpouring of blossoms, blossoms in myriads, blossoms by the thousands; for every plant that lives bears some sort of flower.

Among this world of blooming things, none is more beautiful than the fruit trees known to almost every country dweller. Children love the old apple tree when it sends out its pink and white, faintly sweet blossoms, growing in delicate clusters; and every observer of Nature notes its doings as a landmark in the year. It matters not in what section of the country it grows, whether by a homestead stately or plain; to the members of that home, it stands as an individual of recognized ways and habits, an old friend whispering in blossoms the promise of fruit.

"The world in blossom time
Is a world grown young again,
With a maiden’s flush and a maiden’s smile
And a song for the hearts of men."

But although the season when the fruit trees appear on the landscape, like great bouquets, is hailed by all, few are aware of the subtle difference that exists between the blooms. The blossoms of the apple tree are white tipped with pink, deep red in the bud; those of the pear are pure white, delicate in texture and suggest, when they fall, a belated snow storm. Both of these trees blossom at the same time that the leaves unfold. Again the bloom of the peach is very pink, giving to the atmosphere a soft pastel-like glow, and the flowers of the cherry, in many varieties, are snow-white.

The blossoms of some fruit trees, such as the apple, are made up of five rounded petals, as delicately formed as those of a wild rose; but of other fruit trees, notably the quince, the petals are somewhat pointed, appearing angular in many positions. To watch the unfolding blossoms of the fruit trees is one of the season’s pleasures, appearing as they do one after another in a long fête-like succession.
THE JAPANESE CRAB TREE, A RECENT INTRODUCTION INTO MANY AMERICAN GARDENS, WHERE ITS BLOOM IS RELIED ON FOR DECORATIVE EFFECT.
At the left is a branch of the apricot in full bloom, when it appears as an exquisite addition to nature's garden: the shade which its foliage offers is also a pleasant contribution to the garden's charm.

Pear blossoms which unfold at the same time as the leaves of the trees and which are without any hint of pink, their color being a pure, more ivory white than that of almost any other fruit tree blossoms, effective as lawn decorations or for ornamenting long avenues.

Photographs by Nathan R. Graves.
PEAR TREE BLOSSOMS NOTABLE FOR THEIR SIZE AND THE ABUNDANCE WITH WHICH THEY ARE PRODUCED ON A BRANCH ALREADY IN LEAF.

PLUM TREE BLOSSOMS COVERING THE TWIGS OF THE TREE AND OCCURRING SO EARLY THAT THE FOLIAGE HAS NOT YET BURST ITS SCALES: ONE OF THE MOST DECORATIVE OF FRUIT FLOWERS.
THE FLOWERING CHERRY WHICH
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WINTER.

QUINCE TREE BLOSSOMS SHOW-
ING A DAINTINESS OF OUTLINE
AND TEXTURE IDENTICAL WITH
THAT OF A FEW OF THE EARLY
WILD FLOWERS; THE BEAUTY
OF THIS BLOOM AS WELL AS
THE PRACTICAL WORTH OF THE
FRUIT IT FORETells IS A STRONG
ARGUMENT IN FAVOR OF THE
REINTRODUCTION OF QUINCE
TREES INTO THE HOME GARDEN.
"THE WORLD IN BLOSSOM TIME"

Taking into consideration the possibilities of fruit blossoms for decorative purposes, it would seem that in America we do not avail ourselves of all the beauty from this source within our reach. In Japan, peach blossoms are the inspiration of one of the great annual carnivals. This is because the Japanese, finding an ideal of beauty typified in the peach blossom, plant the trees with the thought of their bloom and the decorative effects that can be gained with it. In this country, on the contrary, a fruit tree is planted, in the greater number of cases, simply because of its fruit, although it is happily true that the rounded out thought of combining blossom loveliness with profitable fruit bearing is at present put into effect by an increasing number of people.

In the old gardens of England, vegetables and fruit trees made up the planting; and in such wise were they laid out that these gardens had a restful charm that time has but accentuated. As civilization advanced, and riches increased, such plants as irises and narcissi began; to be imported from Africa and southern France, and it was then that the great John Parkinson felt the necessity of imploring the English people not to be carried away with the vain beauty of flowers producing no profitable fruit. "Forget not," he said, "that the vegetable is good for the body as well as for the soul, while the plant that bears only a flower is good for naught else but to pamper the vanity of the foolish and idle."

Further, John Parkinson cautioned, most strenuously, against the use of frivolous plants bearing mere flowers in the garden, and urged that they should be kept in borders and far-away places whenever their introduction was deemed necessary.

Since his day, gardens and grounds have come to consider beauty, and beauty alone, to a lavish extent undreamed of in former times. Plants and shrubs have been imported from Japan, in such quantities, and have taken with such avidity to the climate of the New World, that in many gardens of America, the native plants now represent the rarities. The wildest extravagances are found in the planting of our gardens.

In view of this extreme, reached by much planting in this country, the time seems ripe for the selection of various fruit trees, beautiful in bloom, and beautiful in fruit, and which, in the garden, stand for the useful as well as the purely decorative.

None will deny the loveliness of the cherry tree bloom and the marvelous effect that it has on the landscape, yet as ornamental trees, the cherries are seldom planted in America, and their situations are not chosen with thought of decorative results. In Europe, how-
“THE WORLD IN BLOSSOM TIME”

ever, they are regarded by many as unsurpassed for avenue trees, being generally free from pests and growing symmetrically. Splendid roads are there maintained entirely through the sale of the fruit gathered from cherry trees planted along their sides; and in blossom time visitors travel far to refresh themselves with the inspiration afforded by these avenues roofed with flowers.

In America, the cherry will grow wherever the apple succeeds. For the home grounds no fruit tree is more advantageous. In the early season it gives a glow of bloom to localities often lacking in flowers, and its later fruit makes it infinitely more profitable to the home-builder than the ornamental shrubs so generally planted.

In the early days of American garden-making, the quince tree held a prominent place. It did not grow over large, and the housewife delighted in its fruit for the making of preserves. Then insects attacked it, and without seeking a cure it was widely replaced by the flowering shrubs beginning to increase in favor. Today, the quince tree, unless grown commercially, is seldom seen, yet its bloom is very lovely, and about the boundaries of a flower or vegetable garden it is one of the most pleasing trees. Its care is better understood than formerly, when, through lack of proper pruning, it became weakened in its growth and fell a prey to insects and disease. It is now usually trimmed back each year to a low-headed, standard form, somewhat the same as that of a peach tree. Treated in this way, it develops symmetrically and has real ornamental value besides a very practical worth.

American gardens have gained greatly by the introduction of dwarf fruit trees, with their combined decoration and usefulness. Their bloom is equally beautiful, more ethereal in quality than that of many flowering shrubs, and after it is passed there is still the prospect of the fruit offering another period of beauty.

The dwarf pear is grown on a quince root. Its body is stocky and it remains ever a dwarf, coming into bloom and bearing much sooner than when left to develop naturally.

Dwarf apples and dwarf cherry trees have equal advantages as ornamental shrubs wherever in the garden strong accents are required, for when in bloom, they appear like great snowballs upheld to a height nearly approaching that of the garden visitors.

Many of the newer gardens, especially those planted on the lines of old Colonial ones, have a little place set apart for the introduction of dwarf fruit trees. It has been found that they are as satisfactory as ornamental deciduous shrubs and that their shapes, through pruning, can be as well controlled.
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The dwarf apples, grafted on Paradise stock, never attain a large size, and three years after their planting they are so covered with blossoms that a good crop of fruit is foretold. These trees, besides, are so fine in outline that they can be used to offset even formal types of planting. Five or six feet apart is a sufficient distance to set them; a fact which, alone, makes them possible in many places where the ordinary apple tree would be entirely out of place.

APRICOT blossoms are likewise lovely, appearing early in the season. Their fruit ripens after cherries and before that of either peach or plum trees. Moreover, the apricot trees are distinctive in foliage, which is broad, almost circular in outline, and thus capable of producing a more dense, compact shade than can ever be expected from an ornamental shrub.

Then there are plum trees, of which many varieties exist, also hybrids suitable to every locality in the Union. They are attractive in bloom and less exacting in their habits than most other fruit trees. They will grow in backyards, often under adverse conditions, although responding eagerly to proper care. No trees are better in the remote corners of the garden than varieties of plums.

The great eagerness displayed by Americans today for abundance and bloom in their gardens has resulted more or less in a wild medley of color, and flowers so crowded together that the individuality of the plant is completely lost. Mass effects are sought which, without doubt, arouse a certain thrilling wonder, claiming at once the attention.

The move, therefore, toward planting fruit trees for blossom effect, as well as for their fruit, can well be regarded as a step toward correcting much that is useless in the flower garden, and in leading to the consideration of combined beauty and use.