THE BEAUTY, INDIVIDUALITY AND VARIETY OF THE MODERN GLADIOlus: BY ALICE LOUNSBERRY

The more one knows about flowers the more personal one’s regard is sure to become. As with people, each flower develops in the right surroundings its own exquisite individuality of character. One has only to recall in the floral world the forget-me-not with a personality so lovely and yet so distinct from the rose, the fragrance and beauty of the lily so separate from the equally delightful jasmine and the gladiolus holding sway at once unique and regal.

The chances are that only the actual student of flowers realizes the wonderful expansion in the individuality of the gladiolus since its first appearance in the early gardens of America. It has not only increased in force and beauty, but in limitless variety. Through hybridization changes have been made within a comparatively short time that would have been deemed miraculous by those who knew the gladiolus in its former state. It has indeed exemplified, as perhaps no other cultivated flower, the willingness of Nature to develop under the guidance of man.

In height and air of general graciousness modern gladioli are suggestive of tall garden lilies, although in many of their flowers there is a translucence and delicacy of tint that makes them appear kin to the fairest orchids. Today their variety is infinite; for with such abandon have they lent themselves to the grower’s art that on one commercial farm alone in this country there are over twenty-
five thousand varieties on which no common names have been bestowed.

Mr. Groff, whose skill is as indelibly associated with the gladiolus as is Mr. Burbank’s with the Shasta daisy, has produced more varieties of value than could have been foreseen by the wildest imagination; it is almost as though the flowers have responded consciously to his purposes. In this country, furthermore, this work has been carried on by large as well as by small growers, until today the gladiolus can be seen in one place covering acres of ground and again as an individual of beauty in the greater number of gardens.

In color, height, duration of bloom and facility of cultivation the gladiolus ranks among wonder creations. It appears in every shade of brick red, scarlet, carmine and magenta; in all rose tones and in pinks; in pale yellows, deep saffrons and amber shades tinted with flame color; in grays; in blues fading to gray and marked like a blue jay’s plumage; in maroons rich and velvety as the textiles of royalty and in whites tinted with the purest of rainbow colors. The spikes from the sides of which these radiant flowers burst forth stand in some instances three feet high; in others they are as tall as the tallest man. Clearly, then, it can be appreciated that, with this unparalleled variety of tone and shading, the gladiolus is an important factor in the colorscheme of a garden and that its unusual and slender height gives it the same ability to produce architectural effects as is possessed by tall lilies and hollyhocks.

The day has gone by when a garden can hold its own through being merely a collection of plants varying unsystematically in

THE WHITE MARKING IN THE THROAT OF THESE RICHLY COLORED FLOWERS GIVES THEM VARIETY AND DISTINCTION.
FLOWERS FOR THE GARDEN “SKYLINE”

height. Much attention is now paid to the skyline of a successful garden. In certain places it is desirable to keep this line low, while in others, following the lay of the land or the general idea of the planting plan, it should be raised high with blooming plants giving strong accentuations. Many impressive landscape effects have been created with hollyhocks, the tallest and most daring individuals of the garden. There are, however, certain niches which they cannot fill nearly as well as the gladioli.

The roots of hollyhocks are large and heavy and require much space in which to grow; it is unwise to plant them for permanency nearer than eighteen inches apart. Their leaves besides grow so large that they blot out the planting immediately about them; and frequently it becomes necessary to take off their lower leaves to a considerable height on the stem, that light and air may be admitted to lower-growing plants. Their bloom occurs usually from mid-July until mid-August, the time of unstinted revelry among perennials, and then is over for the season.

The advantages held, therefore, by gladioli over these magnificent plants (with which, however, they are in no way rivals, since both serve special purposes), are that their bulbs take up very little room in the ground—a decided benefit in borders heavily planted—and that their length of bloom can be extended, by planting the bulbs in succession, from July until frost.

All who have worked with the problems of perennial planting know that when various beds have passed bloom the space they held becomes shorn of color until the following season. But when such small bulbs as those of gladioli are set in among them this defect is overcome, and as their spikes let free, as if by magic, innumerable radiant flowers the spot again is crowned with beauty.

No better illustration exists of this than when gladioli bulbs are planted among hybrid perpetual roses, identified with the bloom of June. This bloom, once passed, leaves, in the greater number of cases, the bushes bare for another twelve months. Yet all the time they are draining from the soil as much nourishment as it will give them and crying for more. To plant among them other large roots that draw freely on the soil is to sound the doom of the roses. A planting ground of perpetual roses, while not attractive in itself once the bloom is over, can nevertheless still be made a marked feature by setting throughout its extent the small bulbs of gladioli.

Beginning with the passage of the roses the tall spikes of these flowers continue to unfold, if planted in succession, until late in October. None other plant is so desirable for this purpose; the only others possible to plant with roses being pansies, which act as
THE GROFF HYBRID AT THE RIGHT HAS BEEN NAMED "PEACE" BECAUSE OF ITS TRANQUIL WHITENESS: ITS INFERIOR PETALS ARE FEATHERED DAINTILY WITH LILAC: THE FLOWERS ARE LARGE AND WIND AROUND THE STRONG STEM, MAKING A FULL BUT NOT TOO HEAVY SPIKE: THEY ARE IN GREAT FAVOR FOR DECORATIVE PURPOSES FOR THEY BEAR CUTTING WELL, LIGHTEN THE SOMBERNESS OF DARK ROOMS AND LEND THEMSELVES TO ARRANGEMENT IN VASES WITH BETTER GRACE THAN MOST GLADIOLI.

ONE OF THE UNCONVENTIONALLY SHAPED HYBRIDS, WHOSE CURLED PETALS ARE SLIGHTLY FLUTED AND VARIOUSLY TINTED: THEY GIVE A GREAT LIGHTNESS AND AIRINESS TO ANY BED OR BORDER, WHETHER OF MIXED HARDY PERENNIALS OR OF THEIR OWN FAMILY: A BED PLANTED ONLY TO GLADIOLI IS APT TO LOOK STIFF IN SPITE OF THE GORGEOUSNESS OF ITS COLOR DISPLAY, BECAUSE THERE IS LITTLE VARIATION IN THE FORM OF THE STRAIGHT SPIKES: THIS IRREGULARLY GROWING GLADIOLUS WILL BREAK THE SEVERITY OF EVEN RANKS AND ADD A WELCOME INFORMALITY AND GRACE.

Photographs by Nathan R. Graves.
The "America," a cross between Gandavensis and Childsii, is thought by many to be the most lovely of recent introductions; it is very hardy, prolific to a degree; all the flowers face the same way along the stem; they are pinkish lavender in color, a shade seldom seen in any flower except the Cattleya orchids; they should never be combined with other Gladioli.

The group of Gladioli shown at the left are valuable for decorative purposes within doors; this photograph gives some idea of the great range of form and marking of which the new varieties are capable.

Photographs by Nathan R. Graves.
THE "NE PLUS ULTRA" IS DISTINGUISHED BY THE UNUSUAL MARKING OF ITS THREE LOWER PETALS AND BY ITS OPEN, FULL GROWTH: IT IS A FREE FLOWERING VARIETY, APT TO BE TOO THICKLY CLUSTERED FOR GRACE BUT ADMIRABLY ADAPTED FOR SHOXY MASSED PLANTING: ALSO EFFECTIVE WHEN USED WITH BORDERS OF HARDY PERENNIALS.

ANOTHER PHOTOGRAPH OF THE "NE PLUS ULTRA" GLADIOLUS: THE FLARING PETALS SO RICH OF COLOR, MARKED SO BRILLIANTLY, MAKE IT ONE OF THE MOST DECORATIVE AND POPULAR OF ALL THESE SHOXY FAVORITES OF THE GARDEN: IT COMMANDS ADMIRATION WHEN IT STANDS ALONE, WHEN AMONG ROSES OR WHEN MASSED TOGETHER IN ONE BED.

Photographs by Nathan R. Graves.
A PEACH-BLOSSOM PINK GLADIOLUS IS SHOWN AT THE RIGHT, FAINTLY MARKED WITH VIOLET; THE FLOWERS SCATTERED LIGHTLY UPON AN UNUSUALLY TALL STALK ARE LIKE AN ORCHID IN DELICACY OF COLOR AND CAPRICE OF FORM; THIS "PEACH BLOSSOM" SHOULD ALWAYS BE PLANTED ALONE INSTEAD OF IN MASSES, THAT ITS INDIVIDUALITY MAY BE BROUGHT OUT TO THE BEST ADVANTAGE; IT LOOKS ITS BEST IN A BED OF LOW GROWING FLOWERS, ITS GRACEFUL AIRY STALK RISING WELL ABOVE THE HUMBLER FLOWERS, LIKE QUEENLY LILIES.

Photographs by Nathan R. Graves.

THESE GLADIOLI ARE SEEN AT THEIR BEST IN MASSED PLANTING: THEY BLOOM PROFUSELY, THE INDIVIDUAL FLOWERS CROWDING EACH OTHER CLOSELY ALL AROUND THE STRAIGHT, STOUT STEM; IN FORM THEY ARE QUITE DISTINCT FROM THE OTHER GLADIOLI SHOWN ON THIS PAGE, THOUGH THEIR COLOR IS FULLY AS DELICATE: THESE TWO CAN BE USED WITH HARMONIOUS RESULTS IN THE SAME SECTION OF THE GARDEN, ONE SINGLY, THE OTHER MASSED.
FLOWERS FOR THE GARDEN "SKYLINE"

ground covers, and annual asters, which have a somewhat short period of bloom.

ONE memorable garden of roses and gladioli is to be seen on an estate bordering Long Island Sound; its broad expanse shows the best kinds of roses as well as the improved strains of gladioli. Here the latter plants begin to bloom before the roses are entirely spent, becoming stronger and more conspicuous until at last they hold a sweeping, graceful possession of the entire field. They appeal as Nature’s consolation when June has waned and the rose has dropped its petals to the earth.

Among horticulturists, gladioli are known as bedding plants. Their bulbs must be planted each season after all prospect of frost has passed, and from then on, provided their period of bloom is to be extended, until the last of June. In the autumn, when the foliage has begun to turn yellow, the bulbs must be lifted and stored in boxes in a cool place where the thermometer averages about fifty degrees. These bulbs, moreover, increase each season by means of bulblets—the reason that their planting ground can be extended as time goes on.

A sunny exposure suits them best and a sandy loam, although they will also do well in a heavy soil that has been enriched. Rotted stable manure that has been spread in the autumn and spaded into the bed in the spring is the fertilizer used, and it is important that fresh manure should be kept away from them since it causes the bulbs to decay. A handful of sand is, therefore, often put around each bulb when it is planted, or else the bulbs are placed on a layer of sand spread over the earth and later covered with soil. Usually the bulbs are set from three to four inches apart each way, and from two to four inches deep in the ground, the latter space varying according to the size of the bulb. In fact, their cultivation is very simple.

One of the strongest points in their favor, is that gladioli, like peonies, are exempt from blight and insect pests, and that worms neither worry nor destroy them. Spraying and the annoying picking off of marauders, which seem inseparable from many other plants, have no part in the growing of these flowers, which give generously in return for the simple benefits bestowed upon them, even making a desperate effort to thrive under actual neglect.

As picking flowers, gladioli hold a strong position, since their endurance is great. When the lower flowers on the spikes begin to show color they should be cut near to the earth and placed in water, which from then on must be changed frequently. The spike will
remain attractive until the flowers extending to its very top have unfolded. Often the opening up of the entire stalk will take the better part of a week. So popular have these flowers become for house decoration that they are now generally forced in greenhouses by commercial growers who find almost as ready a sale for them as for carnations. When so forced, the bulbs should be planted in the late autumn or as soon as they are properly cured. The small space which they take again makes them welcome in the limited quarters of a glass house as well as in many gardens.

ONE of the largest growers of the gladiolus in America has dubbed it “Everybody’s flower,” because over his vast fields covered exclusively with this plant in many forms he has imbibed knowledge of their democratic spirit, experience concerning the ease with which they can be grown, and the wonder of their beauty as they unfold spontaneously, seemingly in recognition of a human need. Still the mere fact of their being classed as bedding plants has made many shy of planting them in small home gardens tended by some member of the family. The thought of lifting the bulbs in the autumn and of replanting them in the spring presents itself as troublesome to those who do not know the ease with which it is done. The dividing and resetting of perennials and the mulching necessary in their connection is as much of a labor, more in fact, than the exertions required by gladioli. But when knowledge of them is more general these wonderful plants will come into their own, and cling perhaps about the dooryard with the same air of at-homeness that the crimson rambler now disperses when peeping with equal frank friendliness into the windows of palatial homes and humble cottages.

Landscape architects are turning eagerly to the gladiolus to assist them in producing various important effects, and also to give a late bloom to spaces planted to German irises and roses. In themselves these tall plants are objects of pronounced beauty, a fact which does not escape the man who devotes himself to the adornment of the earth.

At the moment, the sword-shaped leaf is desired above all other forms by critical garden builders, because it fits admirably into certain expressions of landscape architecture. In motion it has a rhythmic, mystic quality adding to the romance of a garden; at the same time it has great dignity. One border-planting near the sea, in which a display of sword-shaped leaves is seen, is composed of German irises, yuccas and gladioli. In May, the irises begin to bloom, showing among their powerful sword leaves an infinite number of flowers,
FLOWERS FOR THE GARDEN “SKYLINE”

silver sheened, in white, lavender, blue and yellow and followed without intermission by the Oriental variety in clear purple. When entirely past bloom, the stalks should be cut down, the plants again becoming bold masses of bladelike leaves.

At this time, the yuccas, or Adam’s needles, send forth their white waxlike bells, heavy with scent and raised on stalks sometimes six feet high. In personality, they are entirely different from the irises, yet they spring from round massive clumps of leaves following the same outline as those of the irises, though shorter and less inclined to be moved by the breeze. Among them, even later, the gladioli show their flowers, varied beyond dreams, and likewise surrounded by sword-shaped leaves. Infinitely lovely are these flowers in this particular spot, a surprise and a wonder throughout the remainder of the summer.

Each of these plants, yuccas, irises and gladioli, increases rapidly, and in the rich, sun-touched spot of this particular planting ground they have grown so luxuriously, while extending their dominion, that they have piqued the interest of people for miles about. As far as is known, this exclusive combination of sword-shaped plants stands alone, being the only one of note in the country. The conception, however, is one that might be duplicated in any garden border or wherever plants of striking individuality are desired.

Frequently yuccas and gladioli need staking in order that their stalks of bloom may be kept in position. Happily, this necessity is not as great a disadvantage as formerly when stakes were uniformly
ugly and conspicuous. At present, this same work is done either by means of bamboo colored green, and therefore readily hidden among the foliage, or by modish garden stakes topped by wooden imitations of birds. When properly placed, such stakes add a quaint attraction to the garden.

For border planting and for the back of long pathlike beds where an effect of distance is to be gained, there are few plants more advantageous than gladioli. They can be so easily controlled, so readily blended into the crying need of the garden.

But to become a gladioli enthusiast, one must first and foremost have an eye to the miracles of Nature’s workings, likewise to the cleverness of the horticulturist in following her lead. The love of color must dwell in the heart, color mounting and vibrant, a cloud of flame, black, purple and the gentler tones of gray and pink. For it is to their colors that these flowers owe their obvious charm. Unhappily, they are scentless. In their form is recognized their individuality, the dignity of the slender height to which the spikes are raised, the green blades guarding them like sentinels. In truth, an extensive planting of these flowers leaning full south, growing under the best conditions is lovely beyond description.

THE CLOAK OF DREAMS

THEY bade me follow fleet
   Where my brothers work and play,
But the Cloak of Dreams blew over my feet,
   Tangling them from the way:

They bade me watch the skies
   For a signal—dark or light,
But the Cloak of Dreams blew over my eyes
   Shutting them fast from sight:

I have nor pain nor mirth,
   Wonderment nor desire,
The Cloak of Dreams ’twixt me and earth
   Wavers its drowsy fire:

I dream in dusk apart,
   Hearing a strange bird sing,
And the Cloak of Dreams blows over my heart,
   Blinding and sheltering!

MARGARET WIDDEMER.