HOME-MADE CONCRETE GARDEN CONVENIENCES: BY JULIUS McVICKER

LOOKING up from my desk on the garden floor, I noticed a man absorbed in a book he had picked up from our table of garden books. He was oblivious of everything in the world but the pages of that small book, a treatise on concrete, a dull enough subject to the average person, but to the adept a focusing point for high realms of beauty. His manifest enjoyment and appreciation of that dry handbook proclaimed him a worker, an unconscious member perhaps of the craftsman fraternities, whose headquarters are in this building. Therefore, he must be made to feel at home, given the freedom of the place, supplied with easy chair and study table.

The reason for his interest soon became apparent. He had been experimenting with concrete—with the making of sundials, bird basins, stepping stones, etc., for his own garden. Asking help of neither experienced workman nor books of authority, he had managed, with the aid of dishpan, chopping bowl, stove pipe and soap box, to make a number of things in so original and simple a fashion that, in behalf of CRAFTSMAN readers who love to work in their own garden, I begged him for a detailed account of his work.

Since his experiments are of value to our readers, we quote at length from his description sent at our express request: “The sundial I made from a piece of old furnace pipe, a small square box for the top mold and a larger one for the base. It was my first attempt in the use of concrete, so the molds did not come out perfectly, but as it happened the effect was very much improved instead of ruined, for it has all the appearance of an antique picked up by happy chance in some Old World ramble.

“The little seat is not very large, but very attractive. It has been placed at the edge of the rose garden, where two people may rest and appreciate in full the four hun-
dred roses which supply a continuous succession of bloom from June on till the first frosts. The frame over the arch will eventually be a rose canopy shading the seat. The rose bushes are being trained in a far section of the garden and will soon be transplanted. There is but one upright stem to each rose and the leaves and shoots are kept constantly nipped off until the vine has reached the top bar; then it will be trained like an umbrella, all the foliage and bloom being at the top. In the top photograph the lattice trellis seems to be a part of the more prominent arch, but it is back about six feet from it. The seat was made of old boxes also. It is perfectly plain, but in good proportion, and was all completed in three days.

"One of the pictures shows a bird bath and also some stepping stones. The bath pedestal was made from stove pipe and a box was used for the base. For the top I got a large wooden chopping bowl, oiled it well and filled it with cement. While still very wet I pressed a small tin wash basin in it, till I got the top rim of the basin level with the bowl. Then I nailed some pieces of wood across to prevent the cement from pushing the basin up. For the top rim I took a box, the tin cover to a large bread pan (the kind they set bread in), and the wash basin was used again. I placed the wash basin upside down, took the old iron hoop of a barrel and cut it so that I could bend it round, the size of the basin. When this was done, I wired it to keep it the correct size. I placed it in the center of a box larger than the top of bread pan cover and fitted the box outside of the hoop to the depth of about two inches, then used the bread tin cover as a cook would a biscuit cutter and pressed it down through the cement and left it there till cement was hard. When the outside of the box was carefully broken, the four corner pieces came away by themselves, leaving the top rim, like a large flat doughnut. This I cemented on to the mold that had come out of the chopping bowl.

"The stepping stone path was made by digging holes large enough to admit a deep, square box. Then I tramped ashes to a depth of eight inches and put a mixture of cement, sand and crushed stone for about four inches, topping this off with a sand and cement finishing."

PUTTING UP BIRD BOXES

No tenants give more satisfaction than box-dwelling birds. They can be relied upon for full and complete rental in the form of destruction of noxious insects and the rendering of delightful music; further, they are an unfailing source of amusing and instructive incidents. The boy or girl who puts up boxes for the birds to nest in, supplies them with drinking and bathing places, and provides food for those species which remain in winter, is certain of an unfailing source of pleasure, which can never be known by any one who pursues them with bean-shooter or stones, or simply ignores their presence. The chances are far better that the bird-loving boy or girl will make the finer citizen. The bright boy or girl who closely observes nature, noting the places which the birds select by choice for their nesting sites, will be sure to get ideas which may be utilized in making the home grounds a veritable paradise for birds. The birds may not respond very promptly to the first attempt, but the would-be landlord should not get discouraged. Persistent and intelligent effort will surely bring results.