RECRUITING FOR THE SHRUB GARDEN: A CONFESSION BY EDEN PHILLPOTTS

From "My Shrubs," by Permission of John Lane Co.

"SHRUBS," said George Nicholson, thirty years ago, "do not generally receive the attention they deserve." The statement continues to be true, though things are more hopeful for these plants; they are coming into their own gradually, and the shrubbery begins to be a valued feature of the garden, instead of that worthless jungle with which our fathers were content. Your true gardener naturally seeks and aspires to the unattainable, and since my patch is but little larger than a table-cloth, my desire has always been toward trees. This is the normal ambition of people with small gardens, while others, who possess ancestral acres, and could display a forest and plant pinetums for posterity, will be found to cultivate the moraine, and desire nothing more than enough limestone or granite chips to fill a hatbox. For such is our contrary human nature.

Trees, then, being out of the question here, I have bowed to fate in this matter, and fallen back upon shrubs, or trees that will preserve shrubby dimensions, until my concern with them has ended and I go where our "half-hardies" cease from troubling and the Alpines are at rest. Even shrubs cannot receive all the accommodation they desire; but, on the principle that a lord would rather be elbowed by another lord than a chimney-sweep or a coal-heaver, I only suffer my plants to be hustled by their equals. One hates the pruning knife, yet it has to be used, and if used at the right time (after flowering as a rule) no great harm is done. I can seldom point to "specimens," yet specimens occasionally occur here of precious things whose adult size permits them to reach perfection without hindrance; and, happily, among these may be seen my favorite plant, Rhododendron campylocarpum, a fine, well-flavored piece, seven feet high.

Here, on our limestone crags, rhododendrons and American plants in general are a test by which you may separate real gardeners from those who merely profess to call themselves such. There are, for instance, women in this locality who pass for distinguished horticulturists, yet exhibit neither rhododendron nor azalea in all their
glades. If cross-examined, they answer, readily enough, that limestone is death to these fine things, and that they are therefore impossible. Yet these women, who would shudder at the thought of a ten-pound note for a peat-bed, will spend twice that amount on a hat. A glimpse of the glories of the rhododendron race is as nothing to them against a yard of ribbon and half a dead bird, or a stick of asparagus, perched above their fair brows. They are good and gracious creatures, successful mothers and wives, but they are not gardeners at all, and must neither claim nor be granted that distinction.

Peat, then, we need here, but into no limestone graves are we to thrust it, as I have done to my cost. The peat should be heaped above the limestone, so that your rhododendrons, azaleas, and the rest have their roots safe out of the reach of the nether fires. Build your peat in islands rising full three feet above the stormy seas of lime that autumnal rains set flowing, and all should be well. In my experience few really choice shrubs have much use for lime save the roses. Many good things are, of course, indifferent and tolerate it, while some fruit bearers, such as Diospyros Kaki and Eriobotrya, and perhaps Feijoa, appreciate lime; but, for the most part, my plants can do exceedingly well without, and I have, little by little, carted the local soil away from my garden and substituted beds of leaf and sand and peat. The native loam is so full of lime, and so largely composed of coarse red clay, that I feel happier without it, and escape many discomforts. My beds are always sweet and clean. There is no mud, and mud is a thing that neither self-respecting plant nor gardener appreciates. It is the same with shade. Certain flowering shrubs do their duty in shade, and many insist on half-shade; but no shrub tolerates stuffiness, or deprivation from rain and light. I like plenty of shadow cast from south or west, but overhead shade is much to be avoided. Speaking generally, the Chilians are all peat and shade-lovers, and all exceedingly thirsty. You can hardly overwater them in the summer, and they are quite content to bid farewell to the sun at noon.

Bouqueria gerardiana deserves great praise and attention. From South Africa it comes with snow-white flowers, shaped like a calcocolaria, that sparkle forth in July. This rare and beautiful shrub is recommended to all who dwell in the south and can give it wall space. Indeed, Mr. Wyndham Fitzherbert, who probably possesses the finest specimen in England, will show it to you seven feet high upon a southern slope far from all shelter. But he is a magician, and we common men can only admire without seeking to emulate his feats of horticulture.

Drimys Winteri, from drimys, sharp or acrid, furnished a famous
"MY GARDEN is too trifling even to make a rite of showing it: You may complete an ambit in two minutes: The spot is merely an extension of study and workroom—a private sanctity in whose adornment I take my pleasure."
“DRIMYS IS A BEAUTIFUL EVERGREEN, and its loose milk-white clusters of flowers make a very handsome shrub of it in spring; Here I grow it on a wall—needlessly, for it stands well in the open, and is more beautiful so displayed: D. Aromatica, from Tasmania, is also in cultivation, but is not so effective.

“On the principle that a lord would rather be elbowed by another lord than a chimney-sweep or a coal heaver, I only suffer my plants to be hustled by their equals.”

We should put this plant shoulder to shoulder with some of the wonderful shrubs already at home in our American gardens: It is shown at the left.

Though we advocate the use of native plants as much as possible there is no reason why we should not introduce a few of their exquisite relatives.

"RHODODENDRON DAL-HOUSIAE lives out of doors in summer and makes up bud there, then comes indoors and flowers during spring before again emerging.

“It is a straggling, epiphytic shrub, from the Sikkim, where it climbs into oaks and magnolias; but its lovely loose trusses of lemon-colored blossoms make it a great favorite with me: The blossoms are as big as an average lily, and are much more like Lilium Sulphureum than its own family.”

This flower shown at the right should be better known in American gardens: Experiments have proved that it will grow here if given the same conditions that are provided for it in England.
"MANDEVILLA SVA-VEOLENS, from Buenos Ayres, is a splendid deciduous climber, with flowers like a white jasmine, but three times as large and scarcely less fragrant: The fruit is most curious—twin, round pods above a foot long and joined together at the point.

We should experiment with this beautiful shrub in the same spirit that Mr. Phillpotts used in making his shrub garden, when he says that we must fight for our new varieties.

"I have never won peace in my life or borders, and should not know what to do with it if I had: At any rate, even here, one has plenty of hard fighting with choice shrubs: The battle is often fierce and the losses sometimes considerable, but the fruits, or rather the flowers of victory are rich and rare."

AN EVERGREEN HONEYSUCKLE, Lonicera Hildebrandtii, from Upper Burmah, makes the rest of this race look small, and its huge blossoms hang in splendid clusters amid the deep green leaves.

"The purple bud, three to four inches long, opens pure white, then turns cream color and presently becomes orange yellow.

"Grown on the south wall of my house, and protected as far as possible at moments of undue cold, it prospers most amazingly."
"RHODODENDRON SESTERIANUM, A HYBRID, is very splendid; but the buds should have protection against frost and the whole plant be given a snug corner. The mixture of rosy red and white makes the fragrant trusses a great joy in May: The flower is among the largest of all. That fine hybrid, 'Lady Alice Fitzwilliam,' is only a little less distinguished, and blooms more freely."
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febrifuge before quinine cut it out; now I think the latter drug has taken the place of Winter’s bark, but speak as a layman. *Drimys* is a beautiful evergreen, and its loose milk-white clusters of flowers make a very handsome shrub of it in spring. Here I grow it on a wall—needlessly, for it stands well in the open, and is more beautiful so displayed. *D. aromatica*, from Tasmania, is also in cultivation, but is not so effective.

*Eucriphyia pinnatifolia* stands among my twenty-five favorites. The beautiful thing has flowered with me ever since it was two feet high, and blossoms more generously each successive year. The noblest piece in England—grown to a tree—belongs to Mr. J. Bolitho, of Penzance, and is worthy of devout pilgrimage. Chili has sent us few greater treasures than this glorious shrub. The petals are large and white, and from their midst a sheaf of delicate stamens spring with pale pink anthers. *E. cordifolia*, an evergreen species also from Chili, is declared to be equally splendid and hardy.

What of *Leschenaultia*? Perhaps the name has frightened nurserymen away from this good Australian. Nicholson commends it heartily, and describes some splendid species. Their flowers are all colors of the rainbow, and certain of them ought to be attempted out of doors in the West Country. *L. biloba major* is described by the master above named as “perhaps the finest blue-flowered shrub in cultivation.” Then why on earth are we not all cultivating it? The genus is admittedly difficult, but not seldom a plant that is one long nuisance in a pot will become as amiable as you please out of doors. *Leschenaultia* are a little folk, and might surely repay our attention. I have two plants of *L. biloba major*, whose beautiful flowers—something between a blue butterfly and a lobelia—crown the heathery foliage in sparse corymbis. *L. formosa* is scarlet. I do not hear of it in cultivation. My specimens flower in spring, and then are plunged in a peat bed until the late autumn.

*Lonicera Hildebrandti*, an evergreen honeysuckle from Upper Burmah, makes the rest of this race look small, and its huge blossoms hang in splendid clusters amid the deep green leaves. The purple bud, three to four inches long, opens pure white, then turns cream color and presently becomes orange yellow. Grown on the south wall of my house, and protected as far as possible at moments of undue cold, it prospers—one of the most striking climbers in any garden.

*Mandevilla suaveolens*, from Buenos Ayres, is a splendid deciduous climber, with flowers like a white jasmine, but three times as large and scarcely less fragrant. The fruit is most curious—twin, round pods above a foot long and joined together at the point.
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WITH due solemnity we now approach Rhododendron, the Rose Bay, king of all flowering shrubs, at once the joy and despair of the small shrub-grower. While clinging as ever to the species, one must grant that skilled hybridizers have done splendid work upon this august genus. By mixing fresh blood with the monarchs of the race, they produce plants which only yield a little in distinction to the species from the Himalayas, while flowering considerably later, and so bringing their bud uninjured through the early months of spring. The greater number of rhododendrons from India are hardy; but their early flowering habit means that the expanding truss is exposed to our coldest temperatures at its most critical period of development, and so we lose our bloom, though the shrubs do not suffer. Yet it is said that there are finer Himalayan rhododendrons in Ireland than on the Himalayas, so all whose fate calls them to dwell in the West Country within salutation of the sea may attempt this supreme manifestation of the shrub. But patience is essential. Though fine flowering pieces of the great hybrids can generally be secured from the best growers, with the species it is different, and choice old china is not so rare as fine specimens of the nobler rhododendrons in search of a new home. The race ascends from the tiniest shrublet, in *R. kamtschaticum*, to a tree, where *R. arboreum* towers splashed with spring crimson, and good specimens of the hardy Pontic hybrids are, of course, within all men’s reach; but if your space is limited and your patience without limit, then get the best at once, give them half shade and shelter, and, above all things, remember that as surface rooters they are most thirsty shrubs, and need ample watering in dry weather. A spraying of the foliage with water is also much to be advised after fierce sunshine.

Here, where I dwell on a limestone crag, the Rhododendron demands peat, and if the peat bed be lifted up above the limestone, instead of buried in it, so much the better. Peat graves with walls of the local soil are dangerous. It is wiser to make peat mounds into which the lime cannot percolate during the rainy seasons.

I have some fifty rhododendrons, and my favorite plant of all the garden is *R. campylocarpum*. From an elevation of fourteen thousand feet on the Sikkim Himalaya comes this precious shrub. It stands seven feet high, and in early May the bud breaks a rich orange-red and opens into clusters of loose, butter-colored bells of wax-like substance and most perfect shape, with a splash of dark ruby at the bottom of each cup. It is a generous flowerer, and not seldom I disbud in autumn, and reduce its promise by a hundred points for the sake of the plant. I would travel to the Sikkim, and even climb fourteen thousand feet, to see *R. campylocarpum* spreading its pale
"WHAT OF LESCHENAULTIA? Perhaps the name has frightened nurserymen away from this good Australian.

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THE GREAT FAMILY OF M O C K ORANGES is familiar to Americans in their wild state: They grow luxuriantly all through the South and Middle West.

Philadelphus Mexicanus, shown at the left, Mr. Phippott's favorite, will thank you for a wall: It produces large, semi - double flowers of a creamy - white, most exquisitely centered.
RHODODENDRON ROYLEI has most distinguished plum colored little trusses brushed with delicate bloom.

"There are a few points that even gardeners forget, and one is that for plants that would enjoy the equator, two degrees of frost are just as fatal as fifty: We struggle in snug corners with sub-tropical vegetation, and whisper to it hopefully that our winters down here are a mere flea-bite, and that everything is going to be all right: But we might just as well tell pineapple and sugarcane that it is going to be all right, as some of our victims."

"If your space is limited and your patience without limit, get the best at once and remember they are thirsty shrubs and need ample watering in dry weather."

"EUCRYPHIA PINNATIFOLIA stands among my twenty-five favorites: The beautiful thing has flowered with me ever since it was two feet high, and blossoms more generously each successive year."

The petals are large and white, and from their midst a sheaf of delicate stamens springs with pale pink anthers.
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lemon light under the mountain mists of that wondrous region.

*R. Sesterianum*, a hybrid, is very splendid; but the buds should have protection against frost and the whole plant be given a snug corner. The mixture of rosy red and white makes the fragrant trusses a great joy in May. The flower is among the largest of all. . . .

AND now, before you escape, let me say a few words. It must not be suspected from this list of names, for the most part ugly, that I am one of those hopeless subjects, a gardener who only collects plants as other people collect postage stamps—for their rarity. I spurn the suggestion. No plant is here for its rarity, and few are rare. I could not be a competitive gardener, and would deprecate the least effort at competition even if it were possible. A shrub that has nothing else to commend it but its rarity possesses no charm for me. One’s concern is to collect beautiful things for delight and not for pride. My garden is too trifling even to make a rite of showing it. You may complete an ambit in two minutes. The spot is merely an extension of study and workroom—a private sanctity in whose adornment I take my pleasure. There is no question of fashion here, for it violates all the latest theories of what a small garden should be; rather is it a manifestation of individual taste struggling under increasing difficulties. For the Devon County Council has lifted up a huge Secondary School within ten yards of my garden. I begged them to respect old covenants under which I purchased my home, but they would not. The peace of a Devonian man of letters is nothing weighed up against a cheap site for a public building; so my plea was swept aside, compensation refused, and my garden and dwelling rendered valueless. In some countries they would have respected a serious artist—not in England. Even in some countries they might have thought twice before inflicting this grave wrong upon me; but not in my own country. Still, until the Devon County Councillors commandeer my scanty acre for their own purpose, and bid me go hence, I shall continue to cultivate shrubs and contentment therein. These unexpected tribulations must leave no scar, for men are like wolves; they will do things when hunting in a pack that their cowardice would make them shrink from single-handed. Combined, these worthy but unsportsmanlike souls possessed a giant’s power; and they used it like a giant.

Last winter in *The London Times* there appeared an article on how a gardener should enjoy his garden. I may quote from this pronouncement, and declare that even thus do I take pleasure in my modest garth. Only so may the full flavor and blessed anodyne of

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