THE BEAUTY OF HUMBLE GARDENS: BY MRS. ALEX. CALDWELL

The sense of the beautiful is a gift shared alike by those of low as well as of high degree, as are all the other finest experiences of life, such as love, happiness, joy of motion, delight of perfume and sweet sounds. Therefore there is no reason at all why humble little gardens should not be owned by every one. They breathe as exquisite a spirit and show forth as perfect a form as those of nobler magnitude, because they are made by people who want them very much indeed.

As a matter of fact, unassuming little gardens are often far more pleasing, more adorable and altogether to be desired than pretentious ones, for they are fashioned by intuition, inspired by love instead of created at the arrogant command of some one who does not understand their ways at all, but desires them because he sees other people have them. Gardens as individuals are like flowers themselves, that is, some are queenly like the rose, some splendid of color, but for which we feel no attachment such as the dahlia; some delightfully winsome like the pansy. There are formal aristocratic gardens, flawless in culture and breeding, and there are wild gypsy gardens, brimming over with gaiety, scorning law and restraint; there are modest little gardens that like violets, mignonettes and wild roses, exhale so sweet a fragrance that they steal into our hearts and win everlasting place in our memory.

Of such gardens, "shy and lowly like the flower of sweetest smell," I wish now to exalt in words of deepest appreciation. Here in the South are many, many unassuming, but most attractive little gardens, for we in this sunny, kindly land, love the color, fragrance and beauty of flowers. We are home makers and home to us means not only the house, but the garden encircling it. Knowledge of flower life with us is an inherited instinct. We seem to know, without being taught, just how to make them grow, how to help them put forth their most perfect blooms. We exchange slips with our neighbors, we treasure plants and rose slips belonging to great aunts and grandmothers, we bring home seeds from wild places, and when on any especial vacation trip we return with a small plant or a bulb to set in our garden as memento. So they are full of an association and a beauty beyond that which meets the stranger's eye.

The humblest cottage is often glorified by a rose vine a king might envy or a flowering tree that has been tenderly cared for as if it were a member of the family through many generations. An old flag man that I know tends a row of gay and wonderful hollyhocks that stand beside his mite of a station, because they make him happy and be-
cause, as he said, "they give pleasure to all the folks who goes by 'em." Such brilliant display only costs but a few cents, so it is easy for everybody to have beauty in their doorways who really want it.

When space and purse is limited then a greater thought must be given the matter of gardening. There should be a striving for some one effect. Plant in a bold, strong way, plant enough of any one flower decided upon to give a rich effect. This will save the little garden from any suspicion of an impoverished look. One single, glorious Hiawatha rose or a wisteria vine will endow a garden with superb wealth of beauty. Better a few well selected plants than a jumble of quarrelsome colors. Humble gardens should never be prim and precise and look as though set in their ways. They should instead appear unstudied, unconscious, bright and sprightly as little children. No deep lore of hybridizing, grafting or of landscape composition is required to create a little garden; nothing save the love and interest that suggests what to do. Inexpensive old-fashioned flowers instead of the latest creations, simple hedges of privet instead of box; arches, benches and arbors of rustic rather than of expensively turned columns, compose the humble garden furniture. Hardy plants, bulbs, perennials and flowering shrubs that increase and multiply of themselves should be favored, while native shrubs and trees, such as hydrangeas, azaleas, dogwood, redbud, holly, hemlock, pine and cedars are suitable and to be had for the trouble of transplanting. Honeysuckle, gourd vine and moon-flowers, marigolds, zinnias, petunias and many kinds of lilies will return to the garden year after year if once given a support.

ONE of the photographs of a humble little Southern garden shows a path bordered with iris. With proper selection an iris border will put forth blossoms from early April to the end of July. The German and Japanese species are perennial. The range of colors of these garden favorites runs from purest of white, through the chromatic scales of lavenders and purples, to the Iris Susiana, that is almost a pure black. Spanish irises can be planted freely, for they are very inexpensive and very lovely. Among the Asiatic irises are some whose colors are equal to any orchid for beauty. In this group are many beautiful clear as well as spotted yellows. Then there is also the Pavonia or peacock iris, with small delft blue petals having deep blue eyes.

When the garden is at the apex of its autumn brilliancy, then must its maker plan for the pale, tender beauty of spring colors. Crocuses, tulips, daffodils, hyacinths and such heralds of spring should have an entire winter to develop the buds that unfurl so quickly at the call of
ONE WISTARIA VINE such as shown above will glorify a humble garden year after year giving pleasure to several generations of those who dwell in the garden.
SIMPLY AN IRIS BORDER, an arch of green and path of flags—yet beauty dwells in this humble garden.
SIMPLE LITTLE GARDENS should be planted to perennials so that they will become as firmly established as the owners themselves and seem a vital and important part of the whole place.
PLEASANT SECLUSION IS GAINED even in a humble garden by the planting of a hedge and a vine. Some one object like a bird bath or sun dial adds picture quality.
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the first warm sun rays. If possible, put hyacinths and tulips in beds by themselves, so that they will not be injured by the planting spade when their day of bloom is past and other plants are needed to cover the ground. They can, however, after the tops have died, be taken up, dried, placed in baskets and set out again in the fall. In order to have them at their best they must be given a well drained bed and a moderately rich soil. Tulip bulbs should be set about four inches apart and hyacinths six inches beneath the surface. An easy way to plant them is first to prepare the bed, then place the bulbs upon the surface in the position desired, then make a hole in the ground with a dibber (which can be made from an old broom or hoe handle), dropping the bulb (right side up, of course), and pushing the soil down over it, pressing firmly, seeing to it that the base of the bulb touches the earth and does not hang loosely above it.

Tulip bulbs, unfortunately, are apt to decrease through disease, so that their ranks must be augmented each fall if full complement of color be desired. Much crossing of species is responsible for this delicacy, and while we have a greater variety of colors to choose from than our grandmothers had, our bulbs are not as self perpetuating and hardy as those that graced their gardens. The Darwins are, on the whole, perhaps in the greatest favor, for they are the most gorgeously colored of all and are of gigantic size, flower late and are exceptionally hardy. They may be left in the ground for several years without disturbing. After they are through blooming, sow over them arabis or some such free-blooming annual that will not disturb their sleep. The paper white and the Soleil d’Or narcissus, while great favorites for indoor culture, cannot always be depended upon for the garden. There is, however, a hardy Narcissus biflorus, known as twin sister, that is very hardy. The Poeticus ornatus, Emperor and Barri Conspicui are also hardy and late bloomers. To get the best results spade the ground (previously enriched with manure) about eighteen inches apart and the small ones four, and about four inches beneath the ground. Bulbs should be thinned out about every three years.

November is the time for preparing the garden for its winter’s sleep—roses must be protected with straw or leaves, hardy roses divided, flowering shrubs set out, poppy seed planted, peony beds mulched, geraniums cut back and put to rest, and the plants that have been prepared during the summer for the house brought in and set in sunny windows. November is truly a busy season in the little garden. Plans for the next season’s improvement are then made and seeds gathered. This is the season also when paths can be changed, furniture made, and when the pipes can be laid to the little fountain that is to be installed the following year.