THE CANNA TRIBE.

Editor Wisconsin Horticulturist:—

In reply to your request to write something on Cannas and cultivation would say that the Canna Indica or Indian shot from simply a noble leaved plant of twenty-five years ago has now come to be the most gorgeous bedding plant known in respect to leafage and especially so in respect to the infinite colors and size of its flower trusses.

They are tender herbaceous perennials, being killed by white frost as to the leaves. The cultivation is exceedingly simple, but in the latitude of Wisconsin they require to be started early, being bedded in the greenhouse covering with three inches of soil about the first of March. When the eyes break and appear well above the soil, separate to single plants, and place in good compost in four-inch pots, to be transferred thereafter into six-inch pots, to be transplanted into the open air from the first to fifteenth of June, say thirty to thirty-six inches apart.

For myself I find that a slight hot-bed gives the strongest and most healthy plants. If neither greenhouse nor hot-bed is available, bed the roots out in a warm border, the last of April, and if freezing of the ground is feared cover until the cold snap is passed with litter of any kind. If white frost is feared after the leaves are above ground, cover with a sheet or anything to keep away frost. I have had them in Chicago, by starting early, in full bloom the middle of May, and thence afterwards constantly so until frost in the autumn. Hence the advantage of forcing them early but slowly, until the season of transplanting.
Do not expect success with cannae unless they have plenty of water. I drench the beds thoroughly every two days, after they begin to throw up blooming stalks, and thereafter keep the ground thoroughly moist until frost comes. Thereafter I withhold water to allow the roots to thoroughly ripen. I had in my garden last season Alphonse Bouvier, six and one-half feet high, and Florence Vaughan six feet, with immense trusses of bloom, individual flowers of the trusses spreading to the extent of four inches, down to the dwarf Nicholson three and one-half feet high, with its delicate trusses of lemon yellow flowers. How easy would it be for every suburban home and every farm garden to be made bright with a bed of these magnificent plants, even where only the pump was available for watering. It would be a labor of love for the girls of the family to look after the watering.

As to varieties for general planting, of sorts, excellent growers and that will stand both hot suns and strong winds, I would name among yellow and red spotted, Florence Vaughan and Queen Charlotte; among crimson, Charles Henderson and Alphonse Bouvier; among salmon, Stella Kanst, and among pure yellow, Nicholson. South Park is a fine scarlet, Midway approaches to a salmon red, Chicago is an excellent red, with great trusses of bloom and a large, broad green leaf. Columbia is a deep, velvety crimson. Egandale is, I think, the best of the scarlet purple-leaved sort. Of the new orchid flowering sorts, Italia and Austria are magnificent, and Burbank, not only the most magnificent of any yellow yet sent out, but the largest in its individual flowers. Where these three varieties may be protected from excessively hot
noontide suns, they are the perfection of the canna tribe.

While there is nothing finer, seen from near or afar, growing in masses or singly, cannas are not a flower for the bouquet or the vase. They soon get flaccid when cut. But individual flowers, picked from the truss and placed in shallow dishes containing water, will last two or three days in cool weather. As to the size of the individual canna flowers in the truss, it may be stated that they will run from two and one-half to five inches, according to the variety, the truss of flowers ranging from five inches to eight inches in breadth, and from six to twelve inches in height, and the number of flowers to the truss going from ten up to fifty, or more, and opening in succession. The colors range from straw color all the way down through yellow, salmon, and orange, and down through the reds, from light vermilion to carmine, and the deepest purple, with infinite variegations, pencilings, spots, and markings of deep colors on lighter, especially crimson on yellow, the gold banded on red being especially fine, as in the case of Madam Crozy and others. The large flowering sorts vary in height from thirty inches to six feet, the giant varieties, notable only for massive foliage, green, and purple, reaching an extreme height of eight to ten feet. Of the two latter, I consider C. Discolor the best of the purple foliage sorts, and of the green leaved varieties, C. Gigantea.

Within the last five years I have cultivated perhaps two hundred varieties, and have now forty-six varieties for continued cultivation and trial.

I am not in the trade and sell no plants, but buy those that strike my fancy from year to year.

Very Truly Yours,

JONATHAN PERIAM.