

It is quite a mistake to suppose one class of soil has any great advantage over another; far more depends upon the way in which it is treated. Select, as far as possible, a sheltered but open situation, unless, as often happens, there is but one place, and no other. Whatever may be the nature of the soil, whether clay or loam, dig it deeply, and in the end prepare it in such a way that it is friable all through, and rich in manure.

**INFLUENCE OF WEATHER CONDITIONS.**

Now, I come to the great drawbacks to be met with when striving to perfect blooms. When I have named them, I have pretty well exhausted the real enemies. They are rain, sun, and wind—in other words, the weather. The grower of Dahlias, however, can rejoice in one fact—he cannot only combat these; but if properly done, the work can all come under the heading of hobby gardening. In fact, there are very few things relating to the culture of these flowers which need cause any undue worry.

In nine cases out of ten failure with these lovely flowers is brought about by weather conditions, and so from first to last the weather should be regarded as the thing to guard against. First, select the most suitable varieties; next, plant well, and follow a few simple rules as to thinning and disbudding; guard against wind by systematic tying; and when the flowers are half open, shade a few of the best, and I can promise any amateur he can produce flowers which will be the envy of his neighbours.—H. Stredwick.

**AN AMATEUR'S PRIZE-WINNING BORDER CARNATIONS.**

The following are a few points in the cultural methods as adopted by Mr J. E. McLaren, junior, of Dalmeny Park, near Edinburgh, who is a successful grower and exhibitor, having won a good many prizes at shows in Central Scotland, including Edinburgh, Dundee and Kirkcaldy. Last year's stock numbered close on 200, and this year it will be something nearer 500. Any amateur who has perhaps the matter of three or four dozen plants knows the amount of work entailed in keeping them all going, not to mention the layering; but the results obtained are really worth the work, and in fact to do the thing right one must keep in line with the new varieties which means an ever increasing stock.

The main points in Mr McLaren's system are:—Deep and thorough culture of the soil; efficient drainage; robust healthy plants from good growers; novelty in variety; careful disbudding; a constant watch on mice, wireworms, earwigs, and grubs; early layering and careful potting up; and plants free from coddling.

**ASPECT AND PREPARATION OF BEDS.**

The beds lie with a fair slope towards the north and are sheltered from the prevailing winds. The plants do not have a very warm position and on that account are rather late in coming into flower; this, however, suits the late shows in the district. Should earlier flowers be required, a part may be framed and forced as necessary.

The border is selected in the autumn and well dug over, 2 to 2½ feet deep, of course keeping the bottom and middle spits in their former positions. At the same time a good dressing of sand, road grit, broken shells and leafmould is worked in, together with a barrowload of old well-rotted cow manure to every 8 square yards or thereabouts. Beds are in consequence raised about 6 inches. Each spit has a fair sprinkling of Vapourite.

**PLANTING.**

In early spring the ground receives several dustings of soot and wood ashes, which are forked in, and the ground still left rough. The plants, which are all from layers and have been potted up in 3 and 4-inch pots, wintered in the frames, and carefully hardened off, are planted out at from 15 to 18 inches apart, choosing a fine day for the job. Where ground can be got it is advisable to plant wide, for the back-breaking job of layering is lightened if there is room amongst the plants.

After the plants have fairly got a grip, the hoe is kept constantly amongst them, and a dressing of common salt given on two occasions, and raked in.



A BIG CHRYSANTHEMUM, 12½ INCHES IN DIAMETER, MARY MASON, GROWN BY MRS. A. HARRIS, A BILTON, photo. WELL-KNOWN EXHIBITOR AT PALMERSTON NORTH.

This keeps the plants healthy and clean, especially in dry weather. Frequent dustings of soot on damp days are beneficial, along with a teaspoonful of Clay's to the "lazy" plants.

**FORCING BY "COLLARS."**

Disbudding is seen to as soon as possible leaving two or three buds on the weak growers and three to five on the vigorous ones. Crown buds of course are to be preferred, and are shaded or forced as found necessary. This shading and forcing is done by means of "collars," or small horizontal platforms of wood raised to the height of the flowers by supports. Each platform contains a small hole in the centre, into which the stalk is passed by means of a broad saw cut from the edge of the platform. The bud, which is then above the collar, is either shaded by a flower pot or forced with a tumbler or jam pot placed upside down on the platform.—"The Gardener."

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