

The Flower Garden in January

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LITTLE planting is done in flower gardens in January, as dry, hot weather makes conditions difficult for new plants to establish themselves. There is, however, plenty to be done to maintain a bright display of flowers for the late summer and autumn, and cuttings of many flowering plants taken now will root rapidly in a cold frame and produce good plants to flower next year.

BIENNIALS, such as wallflowers, Canterbury bells, hollyhocks, forget-me-nots, and sweet Williams, may now be sown in the warmer districts in a part of the garden where they will not be in full sun. When the seedlings are large enough to be handled they should be pricked out a few inches apart in a nursery bed to make bushy, well-rooted plants to put out later into the beds where they will flower next year.

Christmas lilies (*Lilium candidum*) can best be moved as soon as the old flowering stem has turned yellow and the leaves have withered. At this season the bulb is almost dormant, but soon starts to root again and send up a new rosette of leaves, after which these lilies can be moved only at the risk of losing next season's flower spike. The nose of the bulb should be planted not deeper than 2in. below the surface. Christmas lilies can be increased rapidly by detaching scales from the bulbs and inserting them upright in boxes of sandy soil, with the tip of each scale just below the surface. Keep the boxes moist, preferably in a cold frame, and plant the scales out when they have rooted. Plants produced in this way should flower in the second season after planting.

Flowers which have faded should be picked off regularly to prevent them from going to seed, as seed formation often leaves plants with insufficient energy to form further flowers. This applies especially to annuals, the flowering life of which can be considerably extended if dead flower heads are picked off regularly.

Gaillardias should be grown in every garden, as they bloom freely and make a bright show, especially in hot, dry weather, and in poor or sandy soils where few flowers will flourish. Seed can be sown now and the seedlings later planted out into the borders in warm, well-drained, sunny places where they will flower next spring. On heavy, rich soil they do not always winter successfully, and in such places they are best raised by sowing the seeds in boxes in spring and planting the seedlings out in October. An interesting method of multiplying gaillardias is to dig up plants in the autumn and cut the fleshy roots into pieces 1½ to 2in. long, making sure that the

end of each root cutting which was nearest the crown is cut off square and the other end with a slanting cut. Put the cuttings upright and 2in. apart in sandy soil with the square end just below the level of the soil. By spring each root cutting will have produced roots and buds and can then be planted out in the usual way.

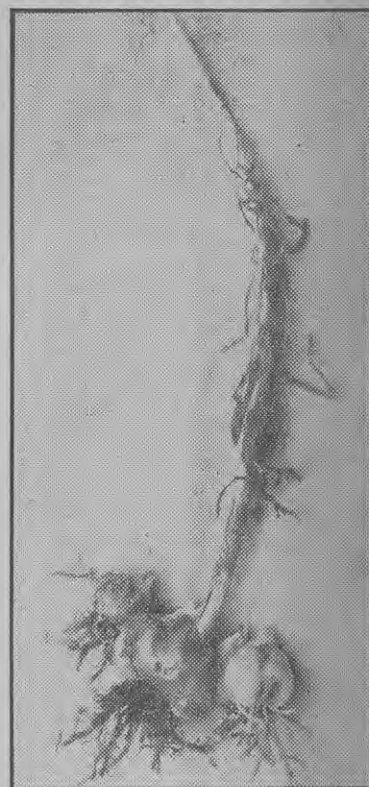
Iceland poppies: Experience in Wellington Province has shown that there is no advantage in planting out Iceland poppies until the end of February or March, as earlier plantings may become very heavily infected with spotted wilt virus disease. Commercial beds planted earlier than this have been known to show such a high infection that they were ploughed in as useless. Seed should be sown in January in boxes which should be kept in a shaded position, covered with paper, and moistened when necessary until the seedlings show, when the paper should be removed. When the seedlings are large enough to be handled they should be pricked out into boxes and later planted in a well-limed bed which should not have been newly manured. This late planting will produce strong plants which will flower well late in the winter and next spring.

Peonies and pyrethrums become relatively dormant for a time after flowering. If they are becoming overcrowded, or more plants are required, the clumps can be split up and replanted in January or February. The newly-planted crowns must be watered freely in dry weather until they have formed a strong root system. Peony roots are fleshy and should not be injured more than necessary when they are divided. Tree peonies, which resent being transplanted, are propagated by grafting and not by dividing their roots.

Propagation of flowering shrubs is an important item in January's work. Budding of roses can continue as long as the bark on the stocks lifts freely. Layer rhododendrons by bringing down each suitable branch and burying it in a trench in such a way that the tip projects above ground and the branch is bent sharply to form an elbow a few inches below the surface. On the sharpness of this elbow, which checks the flow of sap, the successful rooting of the layer depends.

The layer should be rooted and ready to separate from the parent in 1 to 2 years, depending on the climate. It is better to bury the branch in a trench than under a mound of soil, as a mound dries out too easily and requires watering. Cuttings of new side shoots, each a few inches long and cut off with a small heel of older wood, should be taken as soon as they are long enough from *Buddleja* (*Buddleia alternifolia*), mock orange (*Philadelphus* spp.), *Deutzias*, *Forsythias*, *Dier-villa* (*Weigela*) spp., and many other flowering shrubs. The cuttings must be prevented from flagging, and are therefore best inserted in a frame or propagating pit, where the atmosphere can be kept moist until the cuttings have formed roots. A gritty, open soil containing plenty of sand is best for striking cuttings. Silty soils which "run" and form a crust on the top when they are watered are useless for propagating.

Pruning of shrubs which have flowered on last year's shoots should be attended to as soon as the flowers fade by removing as many as possible of the shoots which have borne flowers this year. That ensures that plenty of vigorous shoots are produced to flower next year. In the case of shrubs



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Christmas lilies are almost dormant for a short time after the flower stem dies down. This is the best time to move them, before new leaves start to grow and the bulbs reroot.