

Planning for Next Spring in the Flower Garden

THE successful gardener always plans his work well ahead, and to ensure that the flower garden will be well furnished with plants that will make seasonal displays preparations should be made fully 12 months in advance. Now that the summer- and autumn-flowering subjects have been planted out immediate thought should be given to the provision of plants required to furnish beds and borders with colour during next winter, spring, and early summer. That is the main theme of this month's article for the flower gardener by M. J. Barnett, Director of Reserves to the Christchurch City Council.

IN addition to such bulbous plants as hyacinths, tulips, and narcissi, which are now resting, several of the biennials and plants treated as biennials are excellent for this purpose. Among the foremost of the biennials, the wallflower, which may be obtained in a variety of colour and form, is one of the best for most districts.

Wallflowers

Perfectly hardy and easily raised from seed, the wallflower, though one of the oldest plants in cultivation, is still popular, both for its colouring and for the fresh fragrance of its flowers. To obtain healthy, well-grown plants to be planted out in April and May and to flower profusely during September and October, the seed should be sown not later than the first week in December. The seed germinates readily and no special precautions are necessary in its treatment. In districts not subject to long spells of dry weather the seed may be sown broadcast or in drills in a prepared bed in open ground.

To prevent the surface soil from drying out rapidly under the influence of wind and sun after the seed has been sown, light boughs of brushwood can be laid on the ground to prevent the evaporation of moisture and so assist germination. A simple contrivance which serves the same purpose is a framework of 6in. x 1in. timber placed round the sides of the bed with light scrim stretched over it to provide shade; in dull or wet weather the scrim can be rolled up and removed. As soon as the young seedlings appear above the ground the covering should be removed—not completely at first but gradually, leaving it on during the hottest hours of sunshine for the first few days.

Where only a few hundred plants are required the seed may be sown in a drill in the same way as turnip seed. However, if it is sown too thickly, the young plants will become drawn and leggy, and such plants are more difficult to transplant than those of a sturdier habit. In districts where



[Douglas Elliott photo.]

During the past few decades many new rhododendrons, including hybrids, have been brought into cultivation. Some gardeners are often tempted to try something new at the expense of the old and tried. *Rhododendron fragrantissimum* is not a new hybrid, but it is still one of the best and well worth a place in any garden. Provided it is given a lime-free soil, reasonably rich in organic matter, and a position sheltered from cold and parching winds, it will succeed in the average garden and will prove hardy in most districts. The large white flowers, faintly tinged with pink on the reverse, are, as the specific name suggests, deliciously fragrant. One advantage of this rhododendron is that it does not flower early and so escapes many of the late frosts which frequently play havoc with the earlier kinds. As the bushes do not reach large dimensions, it is a useful subject for the small garden.

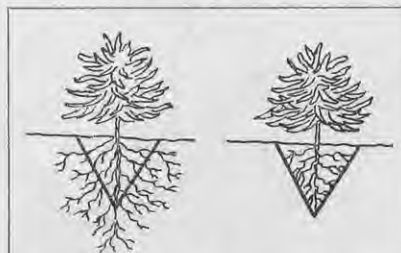
days and even weeks may pass without rain and where the surface soil dries out rapidly, greater success is obtained by sowing the seed evenly and thinly in seed boxes in a frame where they can receive the necessary watering and shading.

By early January the young plants will have grown sufficiently to warrant their being transplanted to open

ground in rows 12in. apart with 12in. between plants. If possible, a dull day should be chosen for the transplanting, and each plant should be given a good watering to settle the soil more firmly about the roots and to assist it to recover from the check it has received. However, the plants recover quickly, and in normal circumstances all that is necessary is to keep the hoe going sufficiently to keep down weeds and to prevent the surface soil from forming a hard crust.

Like most plants, the wallflower has its natural enemies. Grubs of the white butterfly and the diamond-backed moth attack it, but these pests can be checked easily by spraying the plants once or twice with a solution of arsenate of lead. Mildew sometimes attacks the foliage, and the best preventive is spraying with lime sulphur.

During February and March the plants will make rapid growth, particularly if rains are frequent, and sometimes they tend to grow long and soft instead of forming sturdy, bushy specimens. Toward the end of March the plants should be wrenched in the following manner: A



The effect of wrenching wallflowers. Left—Spade cuts made through the roots. Right—The roots a few weeks after being wrenched.