

## WORK IN THE FLOWER GARDEN

once each year; the perpetual flowering carnation, which, under proper treatment, will flower for 8 or 9 months out of the year; and the perpetual border carnation, which apparently is the result of a cross between the first and second types. The larger flowers, the greater length of stem, and the longer flowering period of the perpetual carnations are qualities that have increased their popularity at the expense of the true border and picotee kinds. A few decades ago border carnations held pride of place both in gardens and at flower shows. Many old growers and lovers of the flower will recall with pleasure and longing the fine markings of the bizarre and fancy varieties. The border carnation has not disappeared from gardens, and is never likely to, and there are signs that it is becoming popular again.

### Soil Requirements

Carnations as a class are essentially sun lovers and must be given an open situation where they will receive the maximum of light and not be overshadowed by trees or shrubs. They abhor any soil that tends to be sour, but succeed in a good, loamy soil that is well drained. As they prefer an alkaline to an acid medium, lime in some form should be added to and thoroughly mixed with the soil, and for this purpose old lime rubble or mortar that has been broken up finely and passed through a  $\frac{1}{2}$ -in.-mesh riddle to remove the larger lumps is considered excellent. Not only does the rubble supply lime, but the rough particles of it assist considerably in improving the general texture of the soil. Finely ground oyster grit is a good substitute and may be used liberally. If neither of these materials is available, agricultural lime will suffice.

However, carnations do better in a firm rather than a loose, open soil, and though they dislike wet, sticky soils and will survive dry conditions better than the general run of garden plants, they cannot be starved with impunity. For best results they must receive regular watering and feeding during the growing season, but overhead watering and wetting of the foliage should be avoided. The original wild types of carnations (*Dianthus*), the progenitors of the



[Photo News Ltd. photo.]

Hydrangeas will rapidly be coming into bloom, and the plants must not be allowed to suffer from lack of moisture at the roots. A good mulching of compost or half-decayed farmyard manure round the roots helps to conserve the moisture in the soil. A sheltered position where they receive some protection from the strongest of the sun's rays suits hydrangeas best.

present-day hybrids, grew mostly on limestone cliffs, in open, wind-swept pastures, among rocky crags, and on old castle walls—positions where drainage was perfect and excessive moisture did not collect and remain.

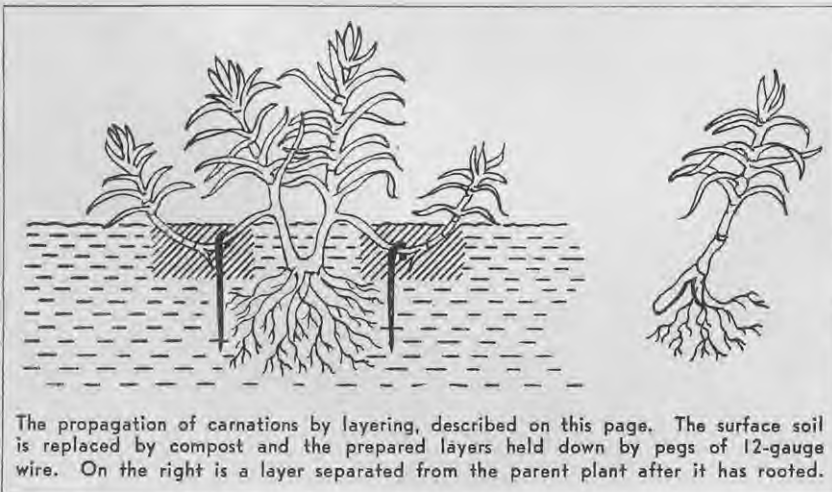
For flowers of good size and substance, carnations should be disbudded, all the flower buds clustered around the upper or terminal one being removed. If need be, the lower

or lateral ones can be left, but when the flowers are required for cutting even these should be removed.

### Propagation by Layers

As border carnations seldom give good results after the second year fresh stocks from the original plants should be propagated immediately the flowers are over. Propagation is easily effected by the natural method of layering, carried out as follows:—

Toward the end of January remove the old flower stalks. Clean round the base of the plant by removing all spent foliage and unwanted growth and the surface soil immediately underneath. Replace this soil with a layer of good compost consisting of loam, sharp river sand, and leaf mould, all of which have been passed through a  $\frac{1}{2}$ -in.-mesh sieve. This compost forms the rooting medium in which the layers are placed. Select sturdy growths, avoiding weak ones and those inclined to rankness; take each in turn, and with a sharp knife remove the lower foliage close to the stem. At a convenient point between the older and younger parts of the growth where the stem is firm but not hard make an upward cut through a joint on the lower side. Press the layer gently into the compost below in such a manner that the "tongue" penetrates downward into the soil and away from the stem, and hold the layer firmly in position with a peg



The propagation of carnations by layering, described on this page. The surface soil is replaced by compost and the prepared layers held down by pegs of 12-gauge wire. On the right is a layer separated from the parent plant after it has rooted.