Planning and Planting the Flower Garden

ALMOST every home site has possibilities for developing an interesting garden, but whether an established garden is being redesigned or a new one planned, problems will be met on each section. This article by M. J. Lockie, Horticultural Instructor, Department of Agriculture, Auckland, sets out basic points to be considered in planning and planting a garden. Application of these recommendations modified to suit individual tastes or special circumstances will contribute toward the achievement of satisfactory results. The section on flower garden work for August is by H. P. Thomas, Horticultural Instructor, Department of Agriculture, Wanganui.

WHEN a new garden is being established or an old one substantially re-arranged it is necessary to have a plan based on a mental picture of the garden desired. Many minor problems and details can be worked out as they arise, but factors which may have major effects on the layout must be considered before work is begun. It may be necessary to adjust the original conception to meet major natural features or buildings which cannot be altered. The amount of work, materials, and finance required for the project should be considered when the plan is being prepared. Factors likely to influence the layout substantially may include soil drainage, the house and other buildings, paths and drive, shelter, the natural contour of the land, and climate.

Contour of the Land

Unless a section is reasonably level, it is essential that the contour of the land should form an integral part of the plan if costs are to be kept down to a reasonable level. If possible, the home, other buildings, and paths should be so designed that advantage can be taken of natural features. Generally this is preferable to attempting to make the natural lie of the land conform to preconceived ideas as to the placing of artificial features.

Drainage

In making plans soil drainage and the disposal of surface water must be considered. In many sections this can be difficult and may definitely affect the layout. Drainage in most home sections should be permanent and consequently should be of permanent materials. The most satisfactory drains are constructed of field tiles. Scoria or metal drains carefully constructed and with a minimum depth of 12in. to 18in. of metal may be considered permanent. Fascine drains are effective for a number of years, but are not suitable for use in positions where it would be difficult or very costly to renew them. Open drains in most situations are undesirable, but if they are concealed by hedges or shrubs, they can sometimes be used effectively, particularly along boundaries. Unfortunately they can be a constant source of trouble in that they must be kept free of weeds to allow free movement of water.

If no satisfactory surface outflow from the section can be found, it may be necessary to dig deep sump holes and to fill them with rocks to take the surplus water. In heavy soils these sumps must be of considerable capacity, as seepage of the water into the surrounding soil can be very slow.

All drains which cross beneath the lines of permanent features, such as driveway or paths, should be planned and installed before the latter are laid down.

Some soil types permit free natural drainage, though heavier soils, especially those with stiff clay subsoils, tend to hold too much water for long periods, especially in winter and spring, if effective drainage is not provided.

Few trees or plants will thrive, and many will not live, in situations where there is excess soil moisture for many weeks at a time. Therefore soil drainage should be well planned and provided for at the outset.

[*Sparrow*

Small islands cut from lawns seldom enhance the beauty of suburban grounds. Not only do they materially reduce spaciousness, but also they create additional maintenance problems in edges to cut and obstacles for the lawnmower. The sweeping vista of lawn, well set out shrub border, and path are badly marred by such an undesirable feature in the garden illustrated above.

Shelter

Shrubs, flowers, and even trees cannot generally establish and thrive when constantly being subjected to buffeting winds, so where more tender subjects are to be planted adequate shelter should be provided beforehand.

Whatever shelter is chosen, whether it is of board fences, live hedges, or trees and shrubs, it should be in keeping with the plan, as well as providing the protection necessary. Where tall-growing trees are required care should be taken to ensure that they are planted far enough from the house, as crowding round the house prevents the free circulation of air, blocks out sunlight, and spoils the appearance of the house by giving it a hemmed-in look. Formal trimmed hedges occupy little space and in many places are the best shelter for a small garden, but hardy shrubs and small trees are often more attractive. If possible, very long or very high hedges should be avoided. They must be trimmed several times each year to keep them in good condition and appearance, and this involves a good deal of work.

Among the numerous hedge plants, two good varieties are *Abelia floribunda* and *Lonicera nitida*. In frost-free areas *Tecoma capensis* provides a fresh green hedge, but it requires support if the height is to exceed about 5ft. Rapid shelter may be gained with buddleia species, which grow readily from cuttings. In windswept coastal areas *Corokia cotoneaster* can be used.

Where a hedge is used as a division in the garden or as a boundary outline rather than as shelter flowering shrubs may be used, such as flowering currant (*Ribes sanguineum*), grevillea (*Grevillea rosmarinifolia*), and particularly the bright orange and red flowered japonicas (*Chaenomeles lagenaria*).

Shrubs with variegated and coloured foliage are also effective; for example,