

BEDDING PLANTS IN FLOWER GARDEN

Many bedding plants provide good cut flowers. Formal beds are not a good source of supply, as the removal of some flowers may unbalance the arrangement, but the annual border and particularly the mixed border provide good scope. When the display for the season is planned enough suitable subjects should always be included to ensure the normal supply of cut flowers for the home.

Raising the Plants

Some bedding plants do best when sown directly in their flowering position, thereby avoiding any check to growth through pricking out and transplanting. In this group are the ones which flower for a fairly short period, such as candytuft, cornflower, linaria, mignonette, night-scented stock, and shirley poppy, and for most true annuals it is claimed to be the best method.

Bedding plants, which flower for an extended period, usually grow better if pricked out and transplanted, because a more compact root system will then develop. By this method more plants can be raised in a confined area and in glasshouses seed boxes are almost universally used and are very satisfactory.

Raising of plants from seed was dealt with in an article on propagation in the December 1956 issue of the "Journal", but it cannot be stressed too often that only by giving adequate attention and care to young seedlings can the best flowering be expected. It is important that seedlings do not become drawn. Sufficient spacing should be allowed either through pricking out, transplanting, or thinning.

It is generally false economy to use cheap or old seed. The facilities required and the labour spent in raising the seedlings are the same, but good seed germinate well and first-class plants true to type and colour should result; not always so when cheap or old seed is used.

Preparing and Planting

No plants can be expected to develop to their best without proper preparation of the soil before sowing or planting. Bedding plants are no exception, but because they are short lived, such cultivation is often curtailed.

Lack of organic matter is common in flower beds and borders and if the climate is favourable, many plants can be grown on a supply of artificial fertilisers. Dry periods, however, are often the test of a good soil. Where a soil contains adequate organic matter the plants have better roots and whether watering is carried out or not, the plants are able to obtain more moisture. When watering is carried out a soil rich in organic matter will absorb the water much better and will not pack tightly nor will it crack when drying out afterward.



Sweet peas providing a floral screen for the veranda.



[Campbell]
Bedding plants should be handled with greatest care when being transplanted.

It is good practice to dig in a small dressing of animal manure or compost every time a batch of plants is removed from a flower bed.

Soil improvement and manuring in the flower garden were dealt with in the October and November 1956 issues of the "Journal".

Seedlings should never be planted out in a dry soil. If necessary, a good watering should be given the day before and the topsoil worked up lightly before planting. The operation of planting will be made easier and the check to the root system of the plants minimised.

Handling of plants should be done carefully. They should have been well watered some hours before and be lifted with as much soil as possible adhering to their roots.

Depth of planting can usually be slightly deeper than in the seedling box or bed, except for subjects which have their leaves in a rosette, such as Iceland poppies, which should never have the crown covered.

Spacing will vary according to the type of plant, but nothing is to be gained by planting too closely; otherwise the plants may develop weakly