

GARDENING NOTES

(By MR. J. JOYCE, Landscape Gardener, Christchurch.)

THE ROCK GARDEN.

To all lovers of flowers and plants a rock garden is a most interesting object, the plants being different from those of an ordinary pleasure garden. The scene is different, plants growing amongst the rocks and crevices which represent their native habitat. Some come from among the stony crags and crevices of snow-clad hills and mountains, others from the banks of ever-running streams and rivulets, and hidden away among the rocks and crannies; others, less frail, love to hide their modest heads under the root of a mighty giant of the forest, upturned by the stormy blast, or among the crevices of a natural archway intended by nature for its less robust favorites. Here they grow in peace and tranquillity, a part of the year dormant, waiting until nature lifts the mantle of snow, when they awaken from their long sleep to bloom, and brighten the landscape. So the enterprising individual, who aspires to have a collection of Alpine plants, must use his wits to construct a suitable home similar to the one which they occupied in their native habitat. On this account, he must study the nature of his subject, and build as near as possible to the position they occupied. Here the characteristics of individual plants must be catered for. The delicate little individual must be sheltered under the crevice of a rock, or hidden away in some little cranny from the glare of the noonday sun; others must be placed where they will be protected from the severe frost. Although coming from a high altitude and cold regions, they have a mantle of snow to protect them from the severity of winter.

The gardener requires a little taste and skill in the construction of his rockery. He ought to know how to build, and what he is building it for. Placing a quantity of stones one above the other, and sprinkling them with soil, and planting indiscriminately is not the way to build a rockery. The rock garden must be built with the object of growing rock or Alpine plants, and the plants must be the main object to provide for when building such. Rock gardening of any pretension is rather an expensive item, so, on that account, it ought to be properly constructed. If a bad beginning is made, the consequences are that things will not succeed, all interest will be lost, and the work will result in failure. The amateur gardener should learn all he can before commencing his task. If possible, he should pay a visit to some good rock garden, where he can get an idea of how to proceed. He can see how the stones are arranged, and how the plants are distributed, which is a very necessary item in the construction of a rockery. A well-built rockery is always a delight and a pleasure

to its owner. There is no spot so interesting to the lover of nature as a rockery with a collection of Alpine plants. Some sites, more than others, lend themselves to the formation of a rock garden, and are not so expensive to construct, such as steep inclines, banks, or hillocks, and where stones are plentiful. These are the places where rockeries show to advantage and suit the positions admirably. And now to proceed with the building of the rockery. First, the outline or shape must be marked off. This must be according to the site and position it is to occupy. The foundation should consist of a quantity of rough soil mixed with stones to form the first layer, and to act as drainage. Then good loamy soil should be banked up to the height the rockery is intended to be, and sloping down to the sides. The stones must be laid first around the edge of the design; the next row to be laid inside in bays and pockets, more soil to be filled in if required to suit the stones. Then the next layer above the last one is carried out in much the same manner, but the pockets to receive the plants must vary in size so as to avoid a sameness in the construction, and this mode of procedure is to be observed to the finish. Each stone should be inserted firmly, so that none will give way if trodden on, and more soil is to be added as the work proceeds. Each bay or pocket is to be filled to the required height at the same time. It is not necessary that too much of the stones should be exposed. When finished, it must be planted carefully with the plants in their proper position. It is impossible to give instruction how to plant without knowing the character and variety to be planted. After being finished the rockery would need a good watering. In a large rock garden means should be provided for getting about, such as a roughly constructed path, but at the same time it should not appear as a pathway, and if there is a plentiful supply of water, a waterfall, leading from the top, dropping into a couple of recesses or more according to height, and at the bottom a nice pond, could be formed, which would add very much to the beauty of the whole. This pond should be edged along the margin with stones to correspond with the rockery.

Methven

(From our own correspondent.)

The St. Xavier's branch of the H.A.C.B. Society held their half-yearly meeting on Monday, January 4, the president (Bro. T. Twomey) occupying the chair. There was a fair attendance. The present officers were re-elected, as follows:—President, Bro. T. Twomey; vice-president, Bro. J. Dowling; warden, Bro. D. McCrenor; guardian, Bro. J. Poff; sick visitors, Bros. J. P. McKendry and J. McGirr; treasurers, Bros. T. Moreland and J. Moreland.

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