

V

SCHOOL LANDSCAPE GARDENING

There are times when we allow our minds to wander wistfully back to our public school days. We miss our youthful companions and many dear remembered things, but we seldom miss the schoolhouse. There are times when we should like to play our school games again, while the playground has faded from our memories. The social and educational features of school life often live as pleasant recollections in the mind of the student, while the physical setting is more often colorless. No doubt the cheerless and unattractive schoolhouse often accounts for

“ . . . The whining schoolboy, with
his satchel
And shining morning face, creeping like a
snail
Unwillingly to school.”

The need is obvious: our schools must be made attractive. The schoolhouses of the past reflect the atmosphere of the textbook, work bench, or test tube; the schoolhouses and school grounds of the future should show a type of education that believes in teaching by doing. Physical appearances may not always be a safe guide as to the character of teaching, but they at least give a strong indication. Again, many schools need shade, windbreaks, and lawns; while others need as well some natural vegetation to lessen the hideousness of their architectural design. Nature has many ways of healing the scars made by blundering man.

“The University of Life has for its student
man,

While the open book of Nature holds the
lessons all must scan.”

For the sake of clearness it might be well to mention a few simple principles of landscape gardening. Two systems of planting are practised, the natural and the formal. In natural planting no definite design is apparent. Of course the planting of every shrub is consciously planned, and yet this planning is not detected in the result. Every tree, shrub, and flower grows as free from the appearance of definite order as it does in the field or forest. In formal planting a very

definite order is observed. All plants have a very definite location with respect to each other, as in the planting of avenue trees and in flower beds and borders. Wherever possible, the natural order is to be preferred. The formal order is rather stiff and as a rule is only permissible where the arrangement of walks and buildings is very formal. Even then the background should be as natural as possible. The brush of the painter can make the rose no more beautiful, and the gardener can plant no better than God.

Every one who attempts to make a planting design should have a proper understanding of symmetry and proportion. A person having one arm longer than the other is unsymmetrical, and such an arrangement is not pleasing to the eye. The same is true of two parallel rows of trees of unequal height. A person who has one brown and one blue eye is queer in appearance; so is a house part brick and part frame, especially when the two parts are not painted the same color. Most people intuitively attain symmetry in planting, but proportion is more difficult. If you will examine any good landscape painting, you will find that the land and sky occupy a definite proportion to each other. Three eighths of the picture is land and five eighths is sky or five eighths is land and three eighths is sky. This three-to-five or five-to-three proportion is known as the golden mean. An excellent article on this subject by Alton Bemet can be found in the March, 1920, issue of the *American Magazine*. This principle is also applied to landscape work. Trees in the background and on the sides of a building should be of such varieties as will at maturity rise above it three eighths of the total height of the tree. This gives a decidedly more pleasing appearance than where both trees and buildings are of the same height. The same rule applies where shrubs are banked back of each other. Where the grounds are small, large trees give a crowded appearance; the opposite is true of large grounds planted in small trees and shrubs only. A good sense of proportion is very necessary in landscape gardening.

Perhaps no part of the landscape is of greater importance than the background. This is usually very much neglected, while the foreground is over developed. The background is the natural setting for the building. The principal features should be trees that

tower over the roof. Wherever the outlook beyond the school is attractive, these trees should be of such number and so arranged as not to obstruct the view. When the view is objectionable, the trees should be more closely planted and shrubs banked in front of them so as to make an effective natural screen. The same principles apply to the two sides of the grounds. Indeed the natural place for the trees and most of the large shrubs is at the back and sides of the grounds.

The central part of the foreground should be reserved for a grass lawn. It is this part of the lawn that is most frequently abused by the planting of trees and shrubs and the making of flower beds. To many people an open piece of sod is merely a place where another tree may be planted. Nothing is more beautiful than a smooth green lawn. At the back this should be at least as wide as the building, and it should gradually widen out to the street or road. The foreground to either side of this should be planted with a few good specimens of trees in harmony with the arrangement of the sides. The playground should never be placed here, but should be at one side or in the rear of the schoolhouse.

As a rule it is very difficult to secure a stand of grass close to the building. It is usually better to plant here shrubs, with a liberal percentage of evergreen. Perennial flowers and root plants are an aid. These serve a double purpose, filling the bare strip near the wall and at the same time serving to round out and soften the sharp angle formed by a building that rises abruptly from the ground. A planting of shrubs is especially desirable in the corners by the step, where trash is so apt to accumulate. If the porches and windows of the first floor have been built unusually high from the ground, the effect will be improved by the use of high shrubs, which will make the first floor appear closer to the ground. The height of the first floor should govern the varieties to be selected for this purpose.

Walks should be made where they will be used, rather than where they would look best. If possible they should be run near the side of the grounds. It completely spoils the appearance of a grass plot in front to bisect it by a walk. There are so many ways of spoiling that grass plot that it is a wonder it ever escapes. Flower beds can be very conveniently constructed beside the

walks. Annual flowers and those that require much cultivation are not very desirable for schools, as the time can seldom be spared to attend to them properly and they are apt to suffer from neglect during vacation. It is far better never to begin any enterprise with your school than not to carry it through to success.

When winter comes, it is desirable to bring outdoors indoors. For the country school teacher, this is as difficult as it sounds, because most flowers freeze so easily; yet nothing is impossible to the one who does not know that it cannot be done. All that is necessary is a will to do, a few window boxes about six inches deep, a few flower nourishers, a few seeds and bulbs, some well-rotted manure, some loam soil, and perhaps some leaf mould. If the leaf mould cannot be had, it can be omitted. Provide drainage for the boxes and place some pebbles or small stones in them and also in the nourishers (flower pots). Fill each with equal parts of well rotted manure, loam soil, and leaf mold. The boxes are then ready for the planting of the seed. A ruler edge pressed into the soil makes an excellent row. Incidentally, this is an improvement on the old use of the ruler. Cover the seeds with four times their average dimension of soil, which is then pressed firmly about them so as to bring to them the moisture so necessary for germination.

Many bulbs such as narcissi and hyacinths are very satisfactory for the school-room. They are planted in the nourisher in September or October and buried under a pile of sand or coal ashes in the cellar or some other cool place. They can be buried out of doors, if slightly more covering is used. Wood ashes probably contain too much lye to be used as a covering, but coal ashes are very good for this purpose. After four weeks the nourishers of narcissi can be dug out and brought to the light. For a succession of bloom bring out a few every two weeks following. Hyacinths ought to remain buried for eight weeks before the first pots are brought to the light. Bulbs that are not so buried do not develop good roots and seldom come to perfection. Tulips are very difficult to force if they are not buried.

Now the question naturally arises as to what to plant. The average flower catalogue is worse than useless, as it would indicate that every plant that it advertises is suited

to every possible locality and condition. Confine your choice to those plants with which you are familiar. The ones you can grow successfully are often growing wild around you. The following list is suitable for planting in Virginia and adjoining States:

LARGE TREES

<i>Deciduous</i>	<i>Evergreen</i>
White Oak	Blue spruce
Pin oak	Norway spruce
American Elm	Hemlock
Linden	White pine
Sugar maple	Holly
Norway maple	
Horse chestnut	
Hickory nut	
Walnut	

SMALL TREES

<i>Deciduous</i>	<i>Evergreen</i>
Dogwood	Arbor vitae
Shad bush	
Judas tree	

SHRUBS

<i>Deciduous</i>	<i>Evergreen</i>
Althea	Mountain laurel
(<i>Rose of Sharon</i>)	Rhododendron
Flowering almond	Dwarf holly
Calycanthus	
(<i>Sweet shrub</i>)	
Hawthorn	
Deutzia	
Hardy hydrangea	
Lilac	
Philadelphus	
(<i>Mock Orange</i>)	
Spirea	
Elderberry	

HEDGE

<i>Deciduous</i>	<i>Evergreen</i>
California privet	Boxwood

CLIMBING VINES

<i>Deciduous</i>	<i>Evergreen</i>
Virginia creeper	Climbing euonymus
Clematis	English ivy
Wistaria	
Trumpet vine	

PERENNIAL FLOWERS

Roses	Golden glow
California violets	Phlox
Foxglove	Iris
Tulips	Lily of the valley
Chrysanthemums	Pansies
Larkspur	Sweet William
Hollyhocks	Hyacinths
Narcissi	Peonies

In undertaking to improve the surroundings of the school, it is absolutely necessary that the teacher make a plan of what she proposes to do. This can only be done after the most careful study of her particular problem. It is best to make a sketch of the grounds upon which the proposed location of every plant is marked. The students should assist in this work and collect most of the material needed from their own homes. This both saves expense and stimulates interest. The actual work should be done by the students under the direction of the teacher, who will find them far more interested in this than in the study of the Gallic wars.

Spring time has come, and our thoughts are drifting from dull books to field, garden, and woods. Our fingers are tired of the pen and are longing to dig into the earth. Let the dead pages of history go for a little while and write a living essay in the soil, the pages of the book of Nature. Too many teachers think more of the books that men have made than of the book God has made. No matter what faults it may have, I can think well of the school that loves trees and flowers.

"Go forth, beneath the open sky, and list
To nature's teachings."

GEORGE W. CHAPPELEAR

THE OATH OF THE ATHENIAN YOUTH

"We will never bring disgrace to this, our city, by any act of dishonesty or cowardice, nor ever desert our suffering comrades in the ranks; we will fight for the ideals and sacred things of the city, both alone and with many; we will revere and obey the city's laws and do our best to incite a like respect and reverence in those above us who are prone to annul or to set them at naught; we will strive unceasingly to quicken the public's sense of civic duty; thus, in all these ways, we will transmit this city not only not less, but greater, better, and more beautiful than it was transmitted to us."