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# BETTER PLANTS

God's first gift to man was a Beautiful Garden



VOLUME I

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*Delphiniums have been given unusual effectiveness in the garden at "Weld," near Boston, where they form great panels of waving blue*

## Delphiniums for American Gardens

By BERTRAND H. FARR

(Reprinted from *House & Garden*, Sept., 1922)

*Seeds from well-developed specimens of the best varieties, like King of Delphiniums, should be used for the propagation of new plants*

Grand and stately are the improved hybrid delphiniums. Their tall spires of bloom, rising to a height of 5 to 7 feet, supply our gardens with a wealth of blue that would be sadly lacking, were it not for these magnificent plants.

No other flower combines so many varied shades of this lovely color, the rarest in the garden. The soft azure of the forget-me-not, the rich blue of the gentian, and the deep sapphire, royal purple, lavender and mauve hues are all represented. The petals, suffused with a beautiful and indescribable rose iridescence, form a brilliant setting for the tuft, or "bee" as it is called, of small white, golden, or black central petals, which, by striking contrast, accentuates the beauty of these large outer petals.

Delphiniums are particularly effective in the hardy border or in masses in front of and among shrubs. In fact, they should always be seen against the background of some harmonious contrasting color, rather than against the blue of the sky. Yellow or white hollyhocks, for instance form a pleasing contrast.

Delphiniums of all shades harmonize with each other, and the effect of a group of seedlings or mixed varieties is perhaps more pleasing than a mass of a single variety.

In Europe a great many varieties have been developed and named. Most of these are very expensive, but while these fine European varieties are eagerly sought for,



and many attempts have been made to establish them in this country, the imported plants have proved to be short-lived and gradually disappear. I do not know of any adequate stock of named varieties existing in this country today. They are very difficult to import, being unable to survive the long period in transit. Only a small percentage can be saved on arrival, and often all are dead. Now, since the Foreign Plant Embargo is in force, further attempts seem hopeless.

There are two reasons why these European varieties have not succeeded here: First, the change of climatic conditions is too great. Coming from the cool, moist climate of northern Europe, they cannot endure our hot, dry summers. In the cooler atmosphere of New England or the higher altitudes of our mountainous sections, they thrive to perfection. I have seen, in the Pocono Mountains of Pennsylvania, wonderful plants 7 to 8 feet in height, which originally came from our garden, but growing with a vigorous luxuriance that I have never been able to produce. This would suggest that in the warmer and more humid valleys the coolest location in the garden should be selected for them, preferably where they receive some protection from the direct rays of the afternoon sun.

The second and probably the greater reason for failure of the imported plants is that named varieties must be increased from year to year from cuttings or frequent

division of roots, and gradually the vitality of varieties continually propagated in this way is weakened. There is a theory among many plantmen that plants, like animals, have their natural period of life, and that only by a rebirth through a natural process of reproduction can a species long exist. According to this theory, a cutting or root-division is merely a portion of an individual already old, and cannot live as long or possess the vitality of a youthful seedling impregnated with the germ of a new life.

This spring I have raised and planted out upwards of a hundred thousand seedlings. As a list of the best named varieties may be of interest to many, I will name here the ones I selected as parents to my seedlings, and I think this may be considered as a fairly comprehensive list of the very best varieties and colors, all of which I have previously grown here, and have seen in bloom. They are as follows:

Amos Perry, Corry, Hugo Poortman, K. T. Caron, Zuster Lugten, Andrew Carnegie, De Ruyter, Josef Israels, Rev. E. Lascelles, Chamud, Dusky Monarch, King of Delphiniums, Salland, Francis F. Fox, Lize Van Veen, Queen Wilhelmina, Statuaire Rude.

All but the last four are double or semi-double. It is a matter of personal taste whether single or double flowers are most to be desired. My reason for using double varieties as seed parents, is that from them one gets both single and double forms, while from single varieties only singles will be produced. Generally these single forms are better and stronger growers, the bloom spikes longer and the individual flowers larger. Most of the named varieties and particularly the single ones, will reproduce themselves in a fair percentage of the seedlings, but the greater number will break into many shades and forms.

*Delphinium Belladonna* is an old favorite with medium-sized single flowers of a beautiful soft shade of forget-me-not blue. It does not grow as tall as the English hybrids. Its habit is more branching, the foliage more finely cut, and it blooms profusely and continuously the entire season. It should find a place in every garden. The true *Belladonna* does not produce seed, but within recent years a seed-bearing strain has been developed, the seedlings of which will come 90 per cent true. The rest of them will come a dark gentian-blue with an occasional deep violet. The *Belladonna* hybrids can only be increased by division, as none of them produces seeds.

*Delphinium sinense*, or Chinese larkspur, blue and white, is a distinct species with smaller flowers borne in the greatest profusion. They are easily grown, very hardy, and fine for massing, reproducing themselves freely from self-sown seed.

*Delphinium formosum*, or "bee" larkspur, is an old garden favorite, the hardiest and most permanent of all. The flowers are very dark blue with white centers and violet spurs. It seems to be more susceptible than any of the others to the attacks of a fungus which blackens the leaves and flower-buds. Frequent spraying with bordeaux mixture is recommended to control this.

All delphiniums are subject to a fungus disease which attacks the roots of strong plants in bloom, causing them to suddenly

wilt and die. A mixture of equal parts of hydrated lime, flower of sulphur, and tobacco dust, mixed with water and poured around the roots is said to be effective in checking this disease.

Delphiniums thrive best in a sandy loam, deeply worked and well drained. As they are strong growers, feeding is necessary to produce the largest spikes. Most growers recommend an abundance of manure. I believe great care should be exercised in the use of fresh stable manure, as I am of the opinion that this often causes the root fungus previously referred to. Any manure used should be well rotted and not applied directly to the crown of the plant. I think a moderate use of pulverized sheep manure or bone-meal worked into the soil around the plants a few inches away from the crown will be safer and more effective.

Delphiniums are perfectly hardy and it is not considered necessary to protect them in winter. Where slugs are present, a sprinkling of coal-ashes over the crowns will be beneficial, and in extremely cold latitudes an inch of loose straw or any light material may be used as a protection. Any thick covering of heavy wet material will cause them to rot. In fact, delphiniums cannot endure an over-wet soil at any time, but should not be allowed to suffer for want of water during a period of drought.

BERTRAND H. FARR

**NIAGARA D-6 controls powdery mildew and other fungus diseases.**

## Announcing a General Manager

The Farr Nurseries has outgrown the classification of a one-man business. It has naturally and gradually evolved itself into a propagating department, a shipping department, field department, a landscape department, and an office and sales department.

To better coordinate and link these departments into a smoothly running business, I have engaged the services of a trained and experienced, and, therefore, qualified and practical nurseryman.

I am pleased to present to my friends, Mr. Lester Needham, who associated himself with our nursery on January 1, 1923.

Mr. Needham modestly confines me to the following brief facts. He would rather have his presence felt than imposed upon you.

1. Graduate of Massachusetts Agricultural College, 1914. Majored in horticulture and landscape gardening. Degree B.S.

2. Five years of practical experience with a New England nursery in the propagating, shipping, and selling departments.

3. Three years of experience with a prominent Pennsylvania nursery.

4. Two months of experience with the Farr Nursery Company and determined that every plant we ship shall be a "Better Plant—by Farr."

## THE MINCH & EISENBREY CO.

216 TO 220 WEST LEXINGTON STREET

FURNITURE  
CARPETS AND DRAPERIES

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INTERIOR DECORATIONS

BALTIMORE

Nov. 2nd., 1922.

Mr. Bertrand H. Farr,  
Wyomissing Nurseries Co.  
Wyomissing, Pa.

My dear Mr. Farr:-

Reading your First Edition of *Better Plants* - By Farr, I note your reference to your "Slogan": in which you fear some of your friends may think your assertion egotistical.

My experience of the past season prompts me to say, the many "*Better Plants*" by Farr that I received this season, are far better than any I have been able to obtain from others.

They are the very finest, and turned out beyond my fondest expectations.

Wishing you much success, I am

Very truly,

EBB:AE.

*Edgar B. Brown*



**HEZA WIZWON**

Says he likes to read Farr's books when March winds blow, then he knows what to do when April sun shines.

**"March—the Month of Execution"**

"Some successful folk spend the greater part of their time in preparation and planning.

"Others 'just begin' and develop as they go with equally good results.

"The better method of the two depends upon the viewpoint and the human element.

"Perhaps a well-balanced application of both methods produces the best gardens."

**This Month in the Hardy Garden**

1. Final pruning of late-flowering shrubs and trees should be done this month or not at all. Do not prune early-flowering shrubs until they have bloomed. Read the article on pruning in last month's issue of "Better Plants." Examine all shrubs and trees for caterpillar nests. Remove them by burning out.

2. Rake up and start a compost-pile with the manure applied to lawns last fall. Lawns should be raked clean and rolled or tramped. Apply a top dressing of wood-ashes and bone-meal wherever possible, or clean up.

3. Dig in all mulches applied to shrubbery borders, perennial beds, etc. When digging in, bury the manure as deeply as possible without interfering with root systems. Cleaned up leaves and manure should be added to the compost-pile.

4. Spray for oyster shell and San José scale before the buds swell. Use any good standard dormant spray. We recommend and furnish Niagara Soluble Sulphur Compound. Reaches you in powder form and is quickly mixed as needed with hot or cold water, in quantity desired. It is of little use to repeatedly spray fruit trees if nearby ornamental shrubs infested with scale are left untreated. Be thorough.

5. Loosen the ground around the shrubs with a spading fork. Tie up climbers. Invigorate specimen trees by digging a trench entirely around the tree about 4 feet from the trunk and filling it with compost or good rich earth well tramped down.

6. Bulbs brought indoors now will open within 20 to 25 days. Double tulips take

a little longer. Figure your supply accordingly.

7. Preparations for grass seeding should be made now. Early sowings will be much freer from weeds.

8. Planting of small fruits can be done this month. Also the sowing of annual seed.

9. Remove boards, straw, burlap, or other protective coverings used on tender plants. Execute all contemplated changes in location of plants.

10. **Plan to do setting out of new plants as early as possible. The earlier the planting the less losses you will have.** The earlier you order, the earlier the nursery can ship to you. The only fair procedure to our mind is to ship orders in the sequence received. We begin spring shipping as soon as the ground opens—usually March 15th or 20th.

11. Make a habit of "heeling-in" your nursery stock the instant it arrives. Plants that are exposed to the wind and sun are sure to be dried out, and heavy losses will result.

**"Gardening for Health"**

By **ELBERT HUBBARD**

(From "The Fra," 1915 Issue)

Ten years ago Bertrand H. Farr's Commonsense Doctor found him City-Tired. His Food didn't taste, nothing listened right, nor looked right. . . . He wanted Something and didn't know What.

Now, the Commonsense Doctor did not give him a Latin Prescription; he did not bale out a Box of Pills, nor a Bottle of Black Tonic—he even did not offer to operate on him at Ten-Thirty the Next Morning. He did better. "Farr," said the wise Old Man, "go back to the Country and dig." Farr went. And that was Ten Years ago.

Farr had energy plus, and the surely returning Health emphasized it. So he dug and dug. . . . And presently the Land bloomed and bloomed. As far as the eye carried grew Farr's Flowers. Then Farr's Second Proposition Confronted him: What To Do with all His Flowers. He was not the Man to keep them for His Good alone.

So Farr concluded to print a Catalog and take some Town-Tired Town-Tied Folks into his confidence.

And in this, too, Fate has favored Farr. Now Farr wants to interest you in Planting Your Own Garden This Year. Farr says, "There's no Spring Tonic like an Hour in a Garden each day."

Farr likes the Hardy Plants Best. He believes that a perennial flower, one that comes year after year, brings with its own sweetness, memories of pleasures past. And so most of Farr's Flowers are the Live-Forever Kind—You'll like them, truly.

And Farr's Plants are all Home-Grown. He gets his fun in the growing. And so will you, if you take Farr's advice and Plant Farr's Flowers.

**Ever Try "Iris Potpourri"?**

One of my customers has left with me a standing order for one bulb of all new and distinctive seedling Irises. I was curious enough to ask her why.

"Well, there are so many beautiful varieties that you simply can't grow all of them in borders, so I have one large bed where all the new ones are placed. I call it 'Iris Potpourri'."

The idea appealed to me, and, I believe, will appeal to many of my friends.

**Here's an Excellent Start**

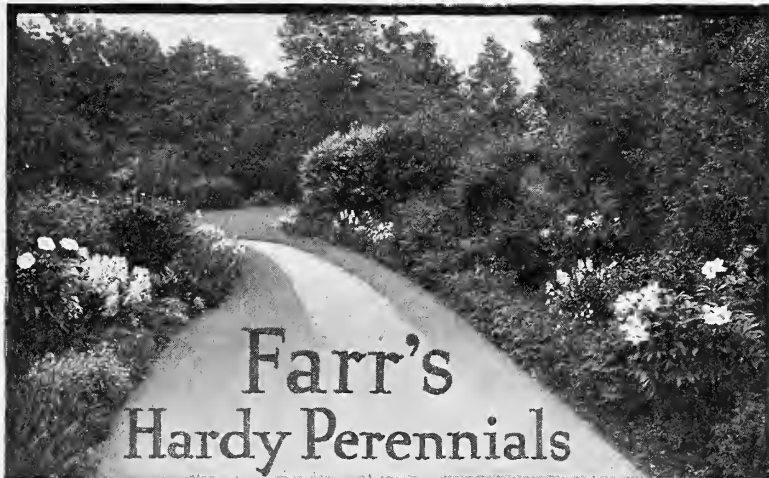
Collection A—Twenty-five separate varieties, packed and correctly labeled, will be sent for \$5; Collection A2—fifty separate varieties for \$10. This is at the rate of 20 cents each, but all of these bulbs are considerably more valuable.



This Iris garden is the pride of Miss Florence Beck, Camp Hill, Pa.

We shall be glad to place the names of your garden-loving friends on our mailing list





Of all of the gardens that have been planned and made, a garden of hardy perennials gives the most real, deep-down satisfaction and joy. Radiant Peonies, gorgeous Irises, Phlox, Delphiniums, Digitalis, Aquilegias and a host of others, make up the succession of flowers in the garden of perennials.

Beside the multitude of perennials, we have here at Wyomissing the old-time favorite shrubs and a score of the new introductions—Lemoine's Deutzias, Philadelphus, rare evergreens for special purposes, rock plants, and many other things that will give character to your garden the first season. Most of these plants, as well as many shrubs, can be shipped and planted safely in spring.

### Farr's Hybrid Delphiniums

**WYOMISSING HYBRIDS, Semi-double and Single.** Grown from seed of the finest named varieties; extra-large flowers in many beautiful shades. 35 cts. each, \$2.50 for 10.

**BELLADONNA SEEDLINGS.** While the old Belladonna does not produce seed, this new type seeds freely and produces long spikes of larger flowers of the same sky-blue tint; of continuous-blooming habit. About 95 per cent of them come true to type, with an occasional plant of a dark brilliant blue.

**CHINENSIS.** A distinct species with finely cut foliage, bearing spikes of medium-sized, brilliant, deep blue flowers in great profusion all summer.

**Chinensis alba.** Same as Chinensis, but pure white; blooms all summer.

**FORMOSUM.** The old-fashioned dark blue Larkspur. Free bloomer and one of the most reliable of all the Larkspurs. Most effective when arranged in groups of a dozen or more plants.

#### INTRODUCTORY OFFER

Above 5 vars., 3 plants each (15 plants)... \$3 50  
 Above 5 vars., 6 plants each (30 plants)... 6 00  
 Above 5 vars., 12 plants each (60 plants)... 10 00

**Bertrand H. Farr—Wyomissing Nurseries Company**  
 1250 Garfield Avenue, Wyomissing, Penna.

### Anemone Japonica (Windflower)

These stately plants are among the showiest and most useful we have for autumn blooming. For massing in the shrubby border, in woodlands, or among the other hardy plants, they have few equals. Their flowers, borne on branching stems, 2 to 3 feet in height, are useful for cutting at a season when other flowers are scarce. The colors range from white to deep crimson, with shades of lilac.

They thrive best in a deep, moist, mellow loam in semi-shade, protected from the afternoon sun. They should be planted in spring, and protected from hard freezing.

**COUPE D'ARGENT.** Large; double; pure white.

**GEANTE DES BLANCHES.** Very fine semi-double, silvery white flowers. The largest-flowered variety. 35 cts. each, \$2.50 for 10.

**LORD ARDILAUN.** Fine double white.

**QUEEN CHARLOTTE.** Large flowers; soft silvery pink; semi-double. 3 ft.

**ROSEA superba.** Medium-sized, single flowers; delicate silvery rose. Very profuse bloomer.

**HUPEHENSIS.** A new species from central China, resembling *Anemone japonica* in growth, but not so tall. Pale mauve-colored flowers appear in early August and continue until late fall. 1 ft.

#### INTRODUCTORY OFFER

Above 6 vars., 3 plants each, (18 plants)... \$4 00  
 Above 6 vars., 6 plants each, (36 plants)... 7 00  
 Above 6 vars., 12 plants each, (72 plants)... 12 50

### Melrosine Kills Rose Bugs

Get ready now to wipe out the striped rose bug and other insects. Melrosine will do it, and is guaranteed effective when used according to directions. A trial size enough for a gallon of solution, sent postpaid for 60 cents.

Standard quantities at the following prices: Pt. \$1; qt. \$1.75; ½ gal. \$3.25; gal. \$6. By express, at purchaser's expense.

## Legend of the Delphinium

After the death of Achilles, the arms of that hero were allotted to him who was the most deserving of the Greeks.

Both Ajax and Ulysses advanced claim to this honor. Ajax, terror of the Trojans, alleged his preëminence as a warrior; Ulysses, the wise, as a counsellor. The arms were finally adjudged to Ulysses.

Ajax, in his disappointed rage and frenzy, committed many excesses. One day he stabbed and killed a number of grazing and harmless sheep. The spectacle of slaughter aroused him to his senses, and in remorse and shame he plunged his sword into his own vitals and perished.

From the soil saturated with his blood sprang the annual *Delphinium ajacis*, and there are many who can, to this day, read the first two letters of his name on the petals of the delphinium.

The name "Delphinium" is due to the flower's resemblance to a dolphin. Others detect resemblance to the lark's heel, lark's toe, lark's claw, lark's spur, and knight's spur.

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BETTER PLANTS—  
A Magazine Devoted to the Hardy Garden