THE

GARDENERS' CHRONICLE.

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OF

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SPECIAL NOTICE.—On and after January 1, 1857, the Price of the "Gardeners' Chronicle" will be reduced to Three Pence.

CONTENTS.

JACOB WIRE.—Some new and valuable wire with which to bind Japan and other flowers will be sent by return on receipt of notice if not having come to hand, 774.

ORCHIDS A SPECIALTY. Steck immunes in extract, true in quality, and moderate in price, 776.

HOLLIES for Hedges, 778.

Rhododendrons, 779.

ORCHIDS AND SUNNERS, 781.

THE GARDENERS' CHRONICLE.

MISCELLANEOUS.—On the Dyeing of Fruits and Vegetables, 784.

Notice to Senders of Cut Flowers., 786.

Catalogue 1855. JACOB WIRE.—Some new and valuable wire with which to bind Japan and other flowers will be sent by return on receipt of notice if not having come to hand, 774.

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MARKET-PLANTS.

Mignonette.—The immense quantity of Mignonette grown annually for market purposes proves that it is one of the most popular of flowering plants; although there is a considerable variation in the quality of different varieties produced during the year, it is during the early spring and summer months that it is most wanted, being then used for purposes of bedding and for cut flowers.

A few years ago there was nearly a total absence of Mignonette, but during the last three or four years the supply has been quite equal to the demands made upon it, and the plant has become generally observed in its culture. In growing Mignonette for market, to secure a profitable return it must be well grown—that is, it must be dwarf, with fresh green foliage and very few pots, with small, sturdy spikes of bloom. If a regular succession be kept up—say, from early in March to the end of June—a fair average price will be obtained. During the time there may be a glut, when the price may fall very low. I have known really first-class stuff to be sold for 3s. 6d. per dozen pots, and it may be sold below 2s. 6d. per dozen, and anything extra good may fetch 1s. 5d. per dozen, especially early in the season.

It is to the late Mr. Parsons, of Brighton, that we are indebted for the first great improvement in the varieties of Mignonette. He was also one of the most successful cultivators of his time. It was with his father, whose name I forget, that I commenced my gardening career, and from that time I have always taken a great interest in this fragrant, though not very showy, flower. The first plant that was selected, from which, after several years' selection “Parson's White,” Recte odarum exims, was obtained; this was a great improvement over the earliest kinds that had been grown. It was exhibited at South Kensington in the spring of 1870, and was awarded a First Class Certificate, it being stated that the plant leads the ordinary kinds by far in the season. It is now difficult to obtain a new strain of this variety. Its chief characters were the whiteness of the flowers, which was caused by an almost entire absence of stamens, which did not give it any colour in other varieties; and an unusual development of the petals, the individual flowers being more than twice the size of those of any ordinary variety, the spikes of bloom of great length, and the plant of vigorous habit.

Miller’s Spiral is another good continental variety this originated with Mr. Miles, of West Brighton; the stock was obtained from one of his gardens, which came up among a batch of the dwarf red Continent Variety, ameliorata. I saw the parent plant of this variety, and I may say I have never seen a better specimen of dwarf plant than that produced. In the collection that was grown for trial at Chislewick a few years ago this proved to be one of the best for pot work, being dwarf in habit, of vigorous growth, and spike of bloom. Although this was received from several firms, there was but little variation, which is more than could be said of some of the varieties. Villimore’s pyramidalis grandiflora, is one of the best for market work; it is dwarf in habit, of vigorous growth, and produces spike of bloom. In this variety the stamens are numerous, and the red-brown anthers are very conspicuous. Matchet is a newer variety, producing immense spikes of bloom; it is one of the dwarf red Continent Queen or ameliorata aura, is another very distinct variety, of dwarf habit; in this variety the anthers are yellow; it is very pretty as a variety, but of no value for market purposes.

Besides the varieties above mentioned, there are many others offered, some of which are distinct. In referring to two or three varieties we shall be at an end. I find in one twenty varieties, all enumerated, while in the other there were eight; and as the same names occur in only four instances it would signify sixteen names. As these names give no idea of the qualities of the varieties, it is misleading, such as Crimson Giant, Pyramidal Bouquet, Crimson Queen, &c. As far as I have seen, these varieties may be considered as the ordinary form, and certainly all the odds are applied to them.

Some of the varieties of Mignonette are liable to considerable variation, and while some are hardy in the extreme, it is necessary to have saving the seed to secure a true strain, especially where there are several varieties grown together. Where a batch of any variety is intended for seed, it should be grown in an isolated position, and as they come into flower they should be gone through and any of inferior quality pulled out, otherwise the stock will soon deteriorate.

CULTURE.

The best position for growing pot-Mignonette is in a sunny frame, and as one must be very careful not to let it become as dwarf as possible, the closer to the glass it can be kept the better; it is also necessary that the glass should be kept clean. For this purpose Mignonette is a good plan to have them in three sections, the first to be filled up, so that when the seed-pots are plunged they are within 3 or 4 inches of the glass; by the time the plant requires more space they may be transferred to the second section, which should be a little deeper; here they may remain until they require tying, when they are transferred to the third, which should be deep enough for the plants to remain until they come into flower and fit for market. A regular succession may be kept up by filling the first section of the pots with separate sowings, the second to be made about the time the first is beginning to show the second leaves; by following on with successive sowings each section may be kept filled up, and a regular supply obtained.

In preparing the seed-pots they should be well dusted, and it is a good plan to wet them or the drainage. The compost for filling the pots may consist of good maiden loam, with a little well-rotted manure added, or, what is often used by market growers, about 2 parts of peat and 1 part of loam; this mixture has provided the soil be fairly rich and not too heavy, anything that is at hand may be used, care should be taken that the plant should not be allowed to get in the least root-bound, as possible. In filling the pots the soil should be pressed as firmly as possible, and the seed should be well covered with soil.

THINNING-OUT, WATERING, &c.

As soon as the seedlings are large enough to handle they should be thinned out, leaving from six to nine plants in a pot. Six plants will be quite enough to fill a 48-sized pot, but it is best not to thin too closely at first, in case a few plants damping off. Watering is one of the most important matters connected with the culture of Mignonette. Great care must be taken not to get the pots too wet, especially during the earlier stages; as the plants get more advanced and the pots full of roots it is necessary to be careful against too much water. Watering is very damaging, if not fatal, at any time. As soon as the roots get round the pots, liquid manure may be used, beginning by using it weak, and using it more freely as the plants grow.

Ventilation must always be given freely, and no artificial heat used except to keep out frost. A. Hemlcy.

THE SEED TRADE.

The Pea-Crop.—The Pea crops have not turned out so satisfactorily as the trade were led to suppose they would two months ago. The early deliveries were generally of a decided surging character, but later ones show that the main crop and later varieties have unfortunately in not a few instances suffered very much indeed. Especially does this appear to be the case in the East Riding, where the crop was large; in the south and west, although there was at one time the promise of good crops, a very large portion is found to have been damaged by the rain which occurred on the 17th and 18th, the seed and new plant seed of the new seed will be grown in an isolated position, and as they come into flower they should be gone through and any of inferior quality pulled out, otherwise the stock will soon deteriorate.

A. Hemlcy.

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