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SHRUBS FOR THE FARM HOME

By C. C. HILLARY

SHRUBS are of value in every garden and, when carefully chosen and properly planted in suitable positions, a collection can provide beauty and interest at all seasons of the year.

In dry country gardens especially, if shrubs are chosen to suit the particular locality, it is possible to add more permanent beauty to the home surroundings than with almost any other type of plant. Tall shrubs are useful for providing shade, and other suitable sorts may be planted in positions where they will give shelter from strong winds.

Varieties can be selected which will provide some flowers nearly the whole year round. Others are of value for the beauty of their foliage which may range through every shade of green and grey to deep copper and some, such as the acalypha and phyllanthus, through the more brilliant colours as well.

LITTLE ATTENTION NEEDED

Once they are properly established, most shrubs require little more than annual attention. This makes them doubly valuable to those who have but limited time to devote to the care of their gardens. When selecting shrubs, future disappointments will be largely avoided if they are chosen to suit the garden—its soil and environment. To buy “difficult” shrubs and then endeavour to make the garden suit their requirements is an invitation to trouble and often a cause of much unnecessary and useless work.

Soil preparation is of importance. Ground that is properly prepared at the outset will give the shrubs a good start and a good start in life is everything. Most shrubs grow better in loam than in sand and, if the soil is very sandy, it will be found an advantage to add a proportion of loam when the sites are being prepared.

THE CREPE MYRTLE, or *LAGERSTROEMIA INDICA*, blooms from December until March and is the loveliest of all our summer-flowering shrubs.

Animal manure of some kind, or vegetable compost, should also be added to improve the fertility of the ground, and a larger feeding area will be provided for the roots if the manures are worked evenly through the soil to a depth of 18 inches or 2 feet. Bonedust, if available, is an excellent fertiliser for shrubs and the best place for it is in



the lower soil. It dissolves slowly and provides a small but regular supply of plant food over a period of years.

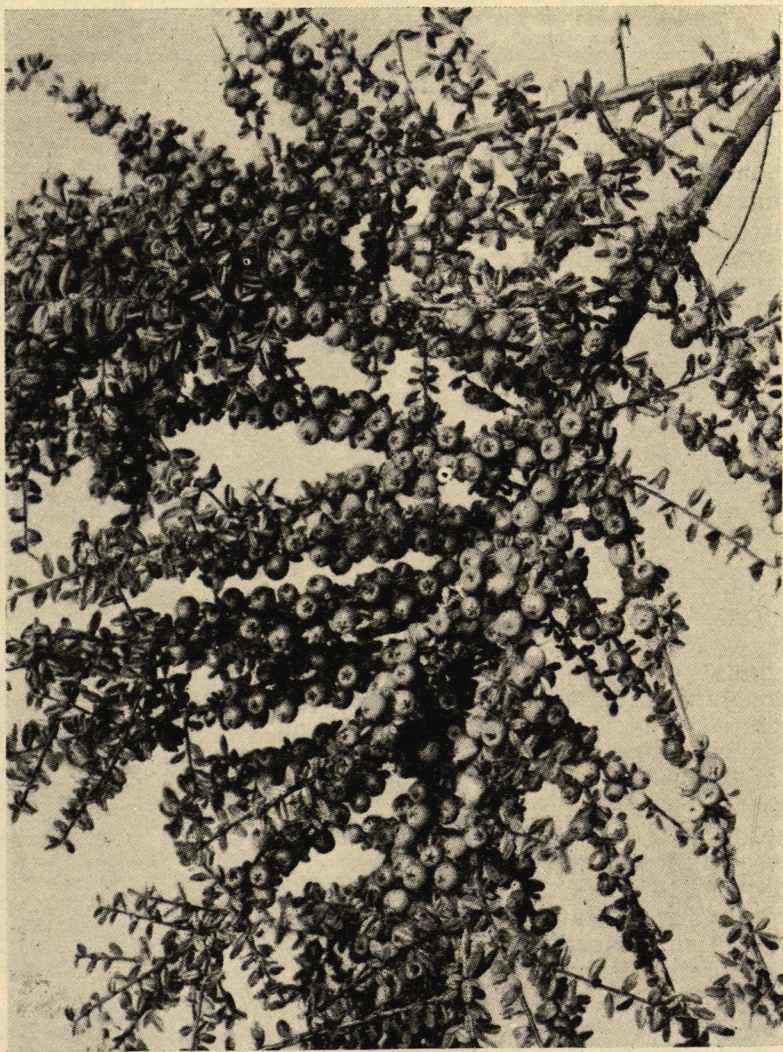
If the shrubs are to be planted on heavy soil, provision must be made for adequate drainage in winter. A simple way of determining whether ground requires draining or not is to sink holes a foot square and two feet deep and fill them with water. If the water disappears within 24 hours the drainage is satisfactory. If not, then the area should be drained with agricultural (porous) drain pipes, placed two feet below the surface, and the water led to a sump or outlet in a lower part of the garden.

PREPARING THE SITE

A method of preparing sites for shrubs in sandy areas which I have found satisfactory, is as follows: Holes three feet in diameter are excavated to a depth of 18 inches—the top nine inches of soil being placed in one heap and the balance wheeled away. A barrow-load of loam plus some bonedust and five to six spadefuls of animal manure are thrown into the hole and dug as far and as evenly as possible into the lower layer of soil. The original surface sand, plus about another barrow-load of loam and some animal manure, are then placed in the hole and forked well to-

gether. This is followed by a good watering to settle the soil, and a week or two later the shrub can be planted.

Shrubs should be planted as soon as received from the nursery and care taken not to expose the roots to the



COTONEASTER—This shrub with its prolific growth of colourful berries is an old-established favourite.

drying action of the wind and sun. After planting, plenty of water should be applied to settle the earth particles around the roots. Deciduous shrubs should be hard pruned as soon as

planted. Evergreen subjects, transplanted from pots, do not need any pruning if they are in good condition at time of planting.

MULCHES CONSERVE MOISTURE

In all districts mulches will be found of inestimable value to shrubs during the summer. Not only do they conserve moisture and help keep the soil around the roots cool, but they largely protect the lower foliage from injury by reflected heat on very hot days. The best material for mulches is old horse or cow manure, but lawn clippings, dried grass and decayed vegetable matter are also of value. The mulch should be spread well around the shrubs to a depth of three or four inches.

It is essential that all grass and weeds should be kept from encroaching close to the roots of shrubs. More especially is this necessary in the drier areas. After rain, and when the plants have been watered, the soil should be lightly stirred with a hoe. This cultivation, however, is rarely necessary with shrubs which have mulches around their base.

When making up any list of shrubs for planting, it is wise to include most of those that are known to thrive well in the district in which the garden is situated. Other shrubs can be included if, after enquiry, it would seem that they have at least a fifty-fifty chance of succeeding. I would stress, however, that it is useless to plant cold-country shrubs, such as rhododendrons, azaleas and forsythias, in the dry country districts of this State.

All of the following shrubs are well worth growing and may be expected to thrive in most gardens in the South-West, if provided with ample water until such time as they are well established:

Acalypha.—An attractive foliage shrub suitable for growing in any warm situation. It tolerates a variety of soils and once it is well established, withstands dry conditions well. *Brownii* and *Marginata* are the best varieties. (Height 4 ft.-6 ft.).

Bauhinia purpurea.—This large shrub produces richly-coloured flowers which resemble butterflies and in consequence it is often known as the butterfly shrub. Thrives best in loams and heavier soils. Deciduous. (10 ft.).

Broom.—Very suitable shrubs for dry situations. Most attractive in spring when the rich yellow blooms envelop every twig and stem. At other times the reed-like growth has little appeal. Will grow in most types of soil. (4 ft.-6 ft.).

Brunfelsia latifolia.—A blue and white-flowered shrub of much beauty which grows as well in full sunshine as in partial shade. It thrives in any fertile soil and requires water in summer. It carries a profusion of large foliage throughout the year and the flowers are freely produced during summer. A shrub which no-one will regret planting. (8 ft.-10 ft.).

Callistemon coccineus.—The scarlet flowered bottle-brush which thrives in most soils and in most localities. Worth a place in every garden. (15 ft.).

Cotoneaster.—A very hardy berry shrub which will grow almost anywhere in most kinds of soil. The grey-green, evergreen foliage is always attractive and the masses of scarlet berries add a bright note to the garden in autumn and winter. The varieties *pannosa*, *serotina*, *parneyi* and *simondsii* all have some slight difference and all are well worth growing. (6 ft.-8 ft.).

Cassia condolleana.—A free-flowering, evergreen shrub which carries rich yellow blossoms in spring. It thrives in any sunny situation. Withstands dry conditions fairly well and will give a good account of itself in most districts. (6 ft.).

Diervilla (Weigela).—One of the loveliest of shrubs and a delight in spring when every twig and branch is covered with fascinating little bells in a pale shade of pink. Requires a certain amount of shade in summer, good soil and moisture. Deciduous. Should be hard pruned after flowering (8 ft.).

Duranta.—A useful, blue-flowered evergreen which grows to a height of 10 ft. Will thrive in most districts and withstands dry conditions fairly well. Prefers a sunny position, but is not exacting in its soil requirements.

Erythrina crista-galla.—A brilliant, crimson-flowered shrub which grows as well in full sunshine as it does in shade. Does not mind a hot position, but requires moisture in summer. (6 ft.).

Euphorbia pulcherrima.—This is the well-known Poinsettia which thrives in most soils which are well drained and reasonably warm in winter. It carries masses of scarlet in late autumn and winter and provides an attractive green background in summer. It responds well to hard pruning which should be done as soon as the scarlet bracts fall. (8 ft.-10 ft.).

Hibiscus.—A widely cultivated and most attractive shrub which thrives in most warm localities. It requires a fertile soil, but grows as well in one of sandy type as it does in loam. Most kinds open their flowers in the morning and they are finished and closed by dusk. The red and pink sorts are usually much more vigorous than the creams and other light shades. Four fine varieties are: Agnes Gault (crimson); James Scoble, (apricot); Mrs. J. H. Davies (salmon pink) and Apple Blossom (pale pink). (6 ft.-10 ft.).

Lagerstroemia.—This is the crepe myrtle and is quite the loveliest of all our summer-flowering shrubs. It opens its first crepe-like blossoms in December and often continues in flower until the end of March. It prefers a loamy soil, but does quite well in sandy ground which is well endowed with humus. There are several varieties, but those that find most favour are: Eavesii (pale mauve); Lavender Beauty (deep lavender) and very beautiful, Newmanii, the best of the reds, but not quite so free with its flowers; and indica (pink). The shrubs are deciduous and require hard pruning in winter. (6 ft.-10 ft.).

Lantana.—An exceptionally hardy shrub which will thrive in almost any kind of soil. Once established, it withstands dry conditions very well indeed. Useful for specimen shrubs and adaptable for hedges. There are several sorts in various colours, including the mauve-pink variety named Sellowiana which is so useful for growing over rocks, fences and old tree stumps. (4 ft.-10 ft.).

Nerium or Oleander.—This is one of the hardiest of all shrubs. It grows well in sand, loam and gravel and withstands drought remarkably well. It makes a splendid specimen shrub and is rarely without flowers during the summer months. It should not be planted close to bedroom windows since it has poisonous properties and dry pieces should never be used in kitchen stoves. (8 ft.-10 ft.).

Flumeria or Frangipani.—A cream and pink-flowered shrub with fragrant blossoms. It will grow well in all warm localities, but requires water in summer. Is as much at home in sandy soil as in loam or gravel. Deciduous. (6 ft.-10 ft.).

Pyracantha crenulata.—One of the best of the red-berried shrubs. Will grow in most districts and in most kinds of soil. It carries masses of tiny white flowers in spring and these are followed by red berries in autumn. The variety Lalandii, with orange-red berries, is equally hardy and equally beautiful. (6 ft.- 10 ft.).

Rondeletia.—One of the aristocrats of shrubland but suitable only for the cooler districts. Carries an abundance of large, light-green foliage and bunches of attractive salmon-pink flowers in spring and early summer. Does better in partial shade and requires plenty of water. (5 ft.-8 ft.).

Solanum phyllireoides.—A rapid-growing shrub which carries masses of blue flowers. Is tolerant of a wide variety of soils and withstands dry conditions very well. (4 ft.-6 ft.).

Tamarix.—A graceful shrub which is useful for dry districts. Grows as well in sand as in loam and produces many panicles of tiny pink flowers in summer. (8 ft.-12 ft.).

FARMERS

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We would like to have your views on the Journal—to know whether you like it or whether you don't. Drop a line to the editor and tell him the features you like and don't like in this issue—or the features you hope to see in future issues.

Tuart trees in a park-like setting near Busselton.
—Photo by courtesy of Forests Department.