

BEATRIX FARRAND
LANDSCAPE GARDENER
REEF POINT
BAR HARBOR, MAINE

October 1, 1946
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Dearest and best of Garden Twins:

Here goes the air mail letter which was promised you for yesterday, but there was so heavy a storm here that air mails were out of the question so please forgive one day's tardiness.

Mr. Thacher tells me you and Robert will be home on the 11th of October and as Mr. Patterson will be in Washington a few days after you, you may like to have a series of questions to review with him or in your own mind before he comes.

Evidently you and I are as usual expressing the same idea in different words with regard to the treatment of the orangerie. It is manifestly impossible that a building in which there are streams of people and post-card selling and which is made a general distributing point for garden visitors should be exactly the same in its character as when you were expecting a group of people at tea, surrounded by banks of flowers and with a pleasant tea urn humming over a cheerful lamp. The furniture naturally must be a little more utilitarian and some of the lead pieces are suffering so badly from being pulled around on the tile floors that they are becoming rather delapidated. Therefore it would seem as though more practical furniture, somewhat like good teak of good models, or good English rattan, would be more fitting and certainly would wear longer. Naturally the ficus will have to be kept a little less wild in its gesticulations than it had grown when I last saw it. This is merely a matter of pruning. Mr. Thacher, Mr. Patterson and I also think that part of the gravel at the west end of the orangerie could be eliminated by paving over it with some of the same floor tile.

Both Mr. Thacher and you have asked when the plant record book will be ready. The main part of the work is done and awaits correction. Mr. Patterson is going to take it with him when he next goes to Washington and I hope to polish it during the winter so that later on it will be ready for printing if it passes your eagle eye. As so many promises with regard to finishing work have had to be broken in the last years, I cannot say just when the record book will be finished but have it very much in mind as a prime necessity.

The steps to replace the dangerous Goat Trail have been staked out by Mr. Patterson and Bryce and the line approved by me. As I know those hillslopes so intimately it seemed quite possible to agree on a line

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without having actually seen the stakes on the ground. The steps will start approximately where they now start and will wander on a long curve through the orchard and will rejoin the lower flights of steps just above the Bird Gates.

Mr. Patterson and I have reviewed the question of the design of the small toilet room north of the tennis court. It seemed to both of us that the design suggested by Steinbraker was a little bit too constricted and that a couple of feet in each direction would make the difference between a building that was easy to use and one in which one was conscious that one had to be careful of one's elbows lest they strike the adjoining wall. There is apparently no fund for this building at present but it would seem to me essential to construct it as soon as reasonably possible.

The review of the walks outside the orangerie seems to make it clear that you are entirely right that no additional platform space is now needed either north or south of the building, and Mr. Patterson, Mr. Thacher and Bryce have all agreed on a change of walk between the front door and the orangerie and a slight widening and also a connecting walk from the entrance road to this new walk. If a platform is later needed outside the orangerie it can easily be contrived.

In speaking of the sundial, you and I have always rather thought of it as being well placed on the south wall of the main building below what used to be your bedroom. Individually I much prefer this position to the more conventional one of the center of the herb garden where I have always "seen" a low sort of épergne-like vase which might be either filled with plants or be a bird bath.

It seems we are also all agreed that the marble bathtub south of the rose garden can be disposed of whenever a purchaser is found.

With regard to the thinning at the Orchard, Star, and Crabapple Hill. Some of this may have to wait but some of it has already been done. It would be my suggestion that we wait to replant the Star until Bryce's own plants (perhaps next spring) can be used. He reports to Mr. Patterson he has nice young plants which he thinks he can set out next year and perhaps not destroy the whole wealth of flower but only take out a few crucial plants and substitute the smaller ones for these great overgrown ones.

Mr. Thacher, Mr. Patterson and I have, I think, agreed that the box on the beech terrace has far outgrown what it should be in scale, and that its delicious fat lumpiness should, for the sake of proportion, be replaced by a much smaller edging which would give added dignity to the great beech and also could give height to the Green Garden wall. Bryce has cleverly got a very good offer for the sale of this Box and I believe its removal is to be done this autumn and replacement made with eighteen-inch Box on the Green Garden wall side, and smaller Box on the beech tree side.

Apparently we all stand together in agreeing that the little brick walk down the Melissande Allée should not be widened as it again seems to fit in to the scale of the whole composition at its present inconveniently narrow width.

A busy search will be necessary probably for some time to come in order to replace the torreyas where they were on the east side of the wall on the upper level of the north vista. Bryce in some way misunderstood their being placed where they were planted, as he seemed to think it was desirable to straighten the walks which were purposely made with a curve in order to soften the rather stern angular lines of the building. Until we can get the torreyas probably we had better put in smallish Yews so that the bend in the walk will have some reason and that no tidy mind would be tempted to make a straight line of what you and I always thought a rather gracious curve.

Obviously some of the magnolias on the north front of the house are too large. They may need replacing completely but Bryce thinks that by clipping he can do much to bring them back into scale.

Mr. Patterson has also reviewed with Bryce the question of a few ailing box bushes in the rose garden and I believe they are agreed on one or two of the first moves in the game.

Perhaps today a letter will go to Mr. Thacher gently remonstrating with him for objecting to all pinks in the rose garden, as the whole south third of the garden has always been planned for a combination of pinks and reds working toward the whites and creams toward the center and the yellows in the north section.

With regard to the herbaceous border. For some time past I have been uneasy about the whole scale and proportion of the border as it now is. The width of the borders and the width of the walk are to my mind too nearly alike to make a really pleasant composition. It seems to me that either the walk should be narrowed or - what appeals to me far more - the borders widened by an elimination of the yew hedge on the north and south sides of the border between Monsieur and Madame Yew. The suggested addition of a border of rare shrubs on both of these sides would ^{add} something to Dumbarton which it has long lacked, and that is a collection of some of the best shrubs which are ^{absent} ~~lacking~~ in other parts of the place: - plants like the Dove Tree (Davidia) and some of the more beautiful hollies, as well as Osmanthus and some of the other evergreens mixed in with summer flowering, autumn fruiting, and perhaps some spring flowering, shrubs as well. The elimination of the yew hedges to my mind would now be all to the good as they are getting increasingly shabby, replacements are impossible even at great cost because the new big plants never look right in the trimmed hedge as they have been grown as individual "melon" specimens in the nursery.

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It is merely a question of time as to when this whole yew hedge must come out and the planting of the shrub borders would in no way interfere with later construction of the walls if later they are thought desirable. The planting of the shrubs, however, will help the proportion of the unit very much and it will further decrease the enormous space that has to be filled with bulbs or annuals throughout the season and yet would give a considerable amount of flower during the entire season. Frankly I should like you and Robert to think of this and perhaps let us make a start in assembling some of the shrubs which would replace some of the tall perennials at the back of the border. The shrubs would contribute a little informality as the chrysanthemums and other herbaceous plants could wander in and out of the bays between the lines of the shrubs. Just as soon as it is possible to replace the hedges which run north and south across the vegetable garden I hope and pray it may be possible to replace these by low stone walls rather informal in character, which would be covered with clematis, jasmine and flowering creepers so that they would add color during the season and make upkeep quite simple.

Evidently the question of the replacement of the box hedge at the front door is going to be one which needs considerable study. For a long time past I have felt that a wall partially garlanded with ivy would be better than the rather disreputable hedge, and that the ends of the wall could be so designed that the beautiful vases which were engulfed in the box bushes could be replaced, as it seems cruel to exile these lovely ornaments to a storage house.

The tidy minded Mr. Thacher evidently would like to have the tablets more cleaned and shiny but I should hesitate to do much scrubbing lest they reappear in their pristine garishness of natural Indiana stone color. I should almost think that a soapy cloth lightly rubbed over the tablet would take off some of the dark shading without revealing too much of the raw stone color.

Once or twice Bryce has been written to with regard to a possible order of bulbs for you but doubtless he, fearing to trouble me, has not answered. I suppose he is attending to this himself. It happens that in the bulb order this year for Dumbarton a considerable saving was possible by ordering through my office directly to the wholesalers, who of course cannot afford to give wholesale prices even to a Dumbarton!

This is a portentous letter. Perhaps another shorter one with regard to the Botanic Garden will catch you before you leave for the East. The summer has not been an easy one and the lesson which had to be learned was the hardest ever set before me, but gradually I am beginning to understand and try to remake a life which had always been sheltered and protected by the wisest and most understanding of companions. It is a bitter disappointment not to come to Dumbarton this autumn but it would be extremely unwise to attempt it as only a very short time seems to exhaust what there is in the bank and the medico tells me that it will be many

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months before I regain even a part of what used to be so lavishly spent in the way of strength and overexertion. This is not a complaint, it is merely a statement of what must have been obvious to everybody except a very stupid person like your fond and ever loving Trix. My arms are around you and Robert and my heart is warmed by your praise of the first little Reef Point Gardens Bulletin. If it has your approval I feel much reassured as I should have liked Max's advice and his approval before it went out into the world.

Yours always with deep affection,

Trix.

Gradually the long hill is being
conquered - there is still a great
slope ahead, but it seems as
though occasionally the top came
in sight - Pray for me, my dear, it
takes more understanding now - I never
had alone.