

IN AN ENGLISH GARDEN.

SCENT.

By CLARENCE ELLIOTT.

ALTHOUGH scent in the garden is always appreciated — when it happens to occur — few gardeners seem to plan and plant

fragrance far and wide over the garden, many others are what Bacon called "fast of their scent." Their perfume may be delicious, but one must inhale at almost point-blank range to enjoy it. And there are plants such as balm, old man or lad's love, and the lemon-scented verberna, whose leaves are deliciously scented — but only when stroked, pinched, or otherwise caressed. Such plants can only be enjoyed when

planted in positions where passers-by can so caress them.

Such flowers as stocks — Brompton, ten-week and the night-scented — the

deliberately for scent as they plan for colour. Folk invite one to come and see their delphiniums, their flowering cherries, or their daffodils in the grass, but they never say "do come and smell my garden." Almost the only plant that ever gets itself planted for the sake of its scent, and for nothing else, is the night-scented stock, *Matthiola bicornis*. By day it looks like some degenerate little slum weed, grey, wiry, sprawling and flowerless. But at sundown it becomes a luminous galaxy of pale lilac blossoms, which fill the air for yards around, and all night long, with a fragrance which is almost too heady and heavy. Scent is a far more subtle thing than colour. A mere passing whiff of scent can conjure up half a lifetime of memories, with a vividness that colour could never achieve. In illustration of this colour-scent theory, I suggest deck-chairs on the lawn in early June, when everything is at its loveliest, and the beds and borders are rich in colour. But one's enjoyment of the colour is a thing of the immediate moment. It seldom carries imagination and memory farther back than the last Chelsea Show. But if the lawn is being mown, the scent of bruised freshly-cut grass is apt to set one dreaming, and put that poor, over-worked word "nostalgic" in grave danger of having to do overtime. I read in the papers recently that the Brentford and Chiswick Council has decided to make a garden for the blind, in which scent will predominate. The Brentford Council is seeking advice from the Exeter City Council, which has one of the few other blind people's gardens in the country. This is interesting and most excellent news. But how does one set about making a garden for the blind? A simple, direct lay-out would seem to be a first essential, but this is a matter for the expert with experience of what the blind must need in getting about a garden. I would have lawns and turf paths as pleasant to walk upon, as well as for the sake of the fragrance of freshly-mown grass. The quiet drone, too, of a mower (hand - pushed, not motor) has its enchantment.

There should be garden seats, some of them in the shade of trees, and some in full sun. They should be comfortable. Too often the seats in public parks are made with their backs rigidly perpendicular, and their "sit" parts severely horizontal, when a slight backward tilt would make them almost luxurious.

The question of scented plants would need careful consideration, for scent, though so often neglected, can easily be overdone. I was once consulted professionally by a man who wished to make a small, enclosed, scented garden. I warned him that if he made it too small, too enclosed and too successful, there was danger of its smelling like a chemist's or a perfumer's shop. I suggested that it would be wiser to distribute his scented plants at tactful intervals about his rather large gardens.

There is no lack of fragrant flowers, and plants which have scented and aromatic leaves. It would be easy to fill a book with the names of such plants. But it should be remembered that whilst some plants broadcast their



IN A GARDEN DESIGNED FOR THE SENSES OF SCENT AND TOUCH: A BLIND MAN READING THE PLAQUE (PRINTED IN ROMAN AND BRAILLE TYPE) WHICH DEDICATES THE BLIND PERSONS' BORDER IN THE ST. LEONARD'S GARDENS, HASTINGS. THIS IS ONE OF THE FEW PUBLIC GARDENS IN THIS COUNTRY DESIGNED AND PLANTED ESPECIALLY FOR THE BLIND. [Photograph by T. Hills, Hastings.]



RAISED NEARLY TO WAIST HEIGHT AND WITH A GUIDE RAIL FOR THE WHOLE OF ITS LENGTH, THE ST. LEONARD'S BLIND PERSONS' BORDER IS NEARLY 50 YARDS LONG, IN WOODED SURROUNDINGS, HAUNTED BY BIRDS AND BEES.

Photograph by "The Hastings and St. Leonards Observer."

In his article on this page, Mr. Clarence Elliott discusses the design and planting of gardens for the sake of their scent and especially the pleasure that such gardens can give to the blind. There must be many private gardens, large and small, which have been designed to give particular pleasure to some blind member of the family; yet St. Dunstan's are aware only of four public gardens, in existence or projected, which are so designed. Exeter was first in the field, and in the spring of 1939 a special Garden for the Blind was opened in the Belmont Pleasure Grounds, where the raised dots on the Braille dedicatory plaque have since become bright through the constant touch of sensitive fingers. Hastings followed suit, and the border we illustrate was opened in the early summer of this year. Brentford and Chiswick Council are discussing plans for such a garden, and yet another is projected at Sunderland. It is of interest that the Exeter garden was primarily the result of an Exeter man, Mr. D. Manning, noting the pleasure that a blind lady took in handling southernwood in a London park.

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comes from. This veronica is a slow grower, but can reach a height of 6 or 8 ft. Occasionally it covers itself with myriads of tiny pale lavender blossoms. But the scent's the thing.

The common gorse, or, better still, its double-flowered variety, might be planted — where its spines would be out of harm's way — for the sake of its musky, honey fragrance, which carries far and wide on a warm day. Bushes of the common box have a pleasant musky scent, less sweet than gorse, but carrying far — when the plant is in the humour to perform, or when the temperature or the humidity is to its liking. Broad beans are usually relegated to the kitchen garden, where their intoxicating fragrance too often has to compete with cabbage. In the blind man's garden, where looks do not greatly matter, a generous bed of broad or field beans would be good value. The two best lilies for scent are the easily-grown *Lilium regale* and the temperamental, but sometime amenable, Madonna lily, *L. candidum*. But *L. regale* should not be overplanted. A friend of mine planted 500 or 600 regales in extensive rose-beds near her house. The scent at night was so overpowering that the family had to sleep with bedroom windows closed. And it was a hot summer.

I would most certainly have water in the garden, if only for the sake of sound, which is almost as important, surely, as scent. I would have a small fountain or a small waterfall, or both. It is surprising what an effective waterfall can be arranged with the flow from even a ½-in. pipe. Water would attract birds, as the flowers would attract insects. Bird song and the small sounds of bees, bumble bees and other insects would add greatly to the restful charm of the scented garden.

One other suggestion. I would have a pleasant roomy aviary to house a pair of doves. Just one pair. The murmur of dove gossip would, I feel sure, supply the perfect obligato to the song of wild birds.