

## PLANTS FOR HOME ADORNMENT.

BY W. C. STEELE.

*Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen:*

It is not necessary for me to come before you with any argument in favor of the ornamentation of the home surroundings. That subject has been so often discussed here, that nothing remains to be said on that line.

I think that we are all agreed that it is desirable to do the best we can to make our homes attractive and beautiful. It then only remains for us to consider the matter of ways and means. There are a few favored mortals who do not need to consider expense when they wish to have a beautiful home. They give orders that such and such things shall be done, and immediately all the energies of gardeners, landscape gardeners, nurserymen and florists are devoted to the task of completing the job satisfactorily. The result is not always as pleasing, to a cultivated taste, as would be expected from the great outlay of money. Unless directed by a wise controlling mind, effect is often spoiled by crowding, or by the use of unsuitable materials. This, however, does not concern very many of our number.

I have thought it best, at this time, to try to give a partial list of trees, shrubs and vines that deserve a place in our door-yards and are available to every one.

Last year, the present Chairman of the Committee on Ornamentals, recommended the live oak, *quercus virens*, and the water oak, *quercus aquatica*. Both are desirable, the water oak makes the most rapid growth, is symmetrical and beautiful. It is, perhaps, not so long lived as

the live oak, but trees of the water oak that were over 50 feet high and with trunks over a foot in diameter, twenty years ago, are still thrifty and vigorous.

There are two other native evergreen trees that should be added to the list, *magnolia grandiflora* and *magnolia glauca*, the latter is commonly known as sweet bay. If given plenty of room, in open ground, where they will not be shaded by older trees, both species will grow rapidly and form symmetrical heads. They are highly ornamental at any season of the year, but are especially so when in bloom.

The camphor tree, *cinnamomum camphora*, is one of the most desirable shade and ornamental trees that I know. It thrives best on moist soil, but will grow wherever an orange tree will live.

There are two smaller evergreen trees that would be more commonly found in cultivation if it were not for the fact that they are very difficult to transplant, successfully. I refer to the two larger varieties of holly, *Ilex opaca*, the common prickly leaved species and *Ilex Dahoon*. The latter is much like the first except that it is of somewhat smaller growth and the leaves are smooth. Hollies may be transplanted by cutting the trunk off close to the ground, in winter, and then moving the roots at once with as little disturbance as possible. I have known holly trees to be transplanted with the tops on, but there are more failures than successes. Hollies are diecious, that is the staminate and pistillate flowers are borne on differ-

ent trees. None but the pistillate trees ever bear fruit, and they will fail unless there is a staminate trees within a reasonable distance. If you live near a hammock where there are wild trees you may safely set out a pistillate tree with the expectation that it will bear fruit. But if not, it is useless to look for berries unless you have both kinds on your place.

In some locations, shade is not desirable all the year, or at least not necessary in winter, in such places a deciduous tree may be planted. One of the very best of these is the softmaple, *acer rubrum*. This tree always excites admiration when in bloom or in fruit. It usually blooms in February and the fruit ripens and falls before the leaves appear.

A close second to the maple is the sweet gum, *liquidamber styraciflua*. It is not striking in appearance when in bloom, but its foliage is attractive, especially in the autumn just before it drops off. The corky winged branches are quite curious in winter when not hidden by the leaves.

Of course those of you who live below the frost line have at least a few orange trees. If any of you are so unfortunate as not to be able to grow the ordinary sweet or sour oranges, we would recommend that you set one or more trees of the hardy orange, *citrus trifoliata*. As an ornamental tree it has one advantage over the sweet orange, that is the flowers come in clouds while there are no leaves on the tree to hide part of them. The curious thorny branches covered with a sheet of snowy blossoms are beautiful.

Shrubs that will bloom all the season are most desirable. Where it is not too cold, the Chinese hibiscus has few equals for showiness, but they are too tender for some parts of the State.

Altheas, a nearly related family to the hibiscus, are entirely hardy and will bloom throughout the entire season. There are varieties of several colors, but not the range of shades that may be found in the Chinese hibiscus. I can especially recommend the double white as being the best of all.

*Tabernaemontana coronaria*, that is a long name, but it has no common name in this country, so far as I have ever heard. Henderson, in his "Hand-book of Plant," says that it is known as East Indian rose bay, quite as long a name and but little easier to remember. This is one of the most desirable that I have ever seen. It is very tender, easily killed by frost, but has grown at my home for about 18 years, without protection, except that a few times it has been banked about the base with earth, and it has not failed to bloom each year. When killed by frost, it sprouts up quickly in the spring and soon begins to blossom and keeps it up until cold weather comes again. The flowers resemble those of the cape Jessamine, (*Gardenia florida*), but are not over one-fourth to one-third the size, and are more delicate in appearance. They are very double, pure white and have a delicate fragrance.

*Bauhinia acuminata* is also quite tender, but in my many years of experience with it, it has not once failed to sprout up and bloom freely.

The flowers are single, pure white, without fragrance, and from two to three inches in diameter. I have only had *Bauhinia Galpinii* for about three years, it comes into bloom earlier in the season, the flowering season, as with the other, lasts until cold weather. The blossoms are smaller and are orange red in color.

*Dautintonia punicea*, known in some

parts of South Florida as "red pea-tree," is a handsome evergreen flowering shrub or small tree. It blooms about twice a year, covering itself with long clusters of large pea-shaped flowers, bright orange red in color. It is beautiful when in bloom, but the blossoms are destitute of fragrance.

*Duranta plumieri*, golden dew-drop, is also an evergreen shrub. It is most showy when in fruit. The flowers are small, a delicate lilac in color and are borne in long racemes. They are quite pretty, but when the large yellow berries are grown the bush is quite showy. The fruit hangs on for months, often until new growth begins again the next season.

There is a desirable class of shrubs that is but little cultivated in this State. I refer to the list of hardy shrubs commonly grown at the North, many of them will do as well, or better, in Florida as anywhere. There is only one objection to them, that being that they bloom but once a year and are deciduous. There is one exception, one of the best of these old favorites, the lilac, *syringa vulgaris*, cannot be successfully grown in Florida, or at least I have failed and have never heard of any one that has made them do well or even live, for any length of time. I can recommend the Japan quince, *cydonia japonica*, common syringa or mock orange, *philadelphus coronarius*, *weigelia rosea* and other varieties of *Weigelia*. The different varieties of *Spirea* should also be included. All of these are showy flowering shrubs. The blossoms of the syringa or mock orange, are almost as fragrant as true orange flowers.

I am exceeding the limit and must omit many equally valuable species, but I cannot bear to stop without speaking of a few vines. First the *Ipomoeas*, the peren-

nial varieties are all desirable. *Ipomoea learii* is a strong grower and profuse bloomer, flowers large, dark purple. Like the morning glory, on hot days these blossoms fade by noon or soon after, but in cool weather, I have seen them stand up until nearly or quite noon of the second day. A curious fact about them is that when they last until the second day, the color fades into a dull red.

*Ipomoea mortoni* is, if possible, a more rampant grower than *I. learii*, but is not so free a bloomer. Flowers red and smaller in size.

Both of these species may become pests if allowed to escape into land that you wish to cultivate. They run on the surface of the soil and root along every inch of their length. In that case, the more you plow or cultivate them the more you scatter the roots and the more plants you have. The only effectual way to destroy them is to cut them off, just below the surface, with a hoe, as the roots alone will not sprout. An ounce of prevention is worth not only a pound of cure, but many of them, do not allow the vines to run on the ground at all.

*Ipomoea Michauxii*, of Chapman's Southern Flora, but *I. jalapa* of the Cyclopedia of American Horticulture, has received the name of "blushing beauty moonflower." It grows from a large tuberous root, often a foot or more in diameter, and has been called "potato-vine." It is a strong grower and a free bloomer, flowers open about four o'clock p. m., color delicate pink. *Ipomoea sinuata* is known in some localities as "noon-day glory." This species can be easily recognized by its foliage, which looks much like that of the rose geranium. It is a vigorous grower, though the stems are quite slender. It blooms freely, flow-

ers small, white with a dark center, opening about noon.

*Rhynchospermum Jasminoides*, sometimes called Star Jassamine is a woody evergreen vine of strong growth and hardy throughout this State. In the spring it is covered with small, pure white flowers that are quite fragrant.

I have a vine of this plant that stands about ten feet high by six or eight wide and three feet through, that has been in bloom for a month. During that time the foliage has been nearly or quite, hidden by the dense sheet of flowers which have covered it. In the evening the fragrance is so strong as to be almost overpowering.

I cannot cover the entire list of desirable vines, but there is one more to which I wish to call attention. It is *Pereskia aculeata*, sometimes called "lemon vine," from that fact that the leaves are shaped like those of a lemon tree, and are thick and glossy. This plant is one of the few members of the true cactus family that has leaves. It is really a cactus, though few would suspect it, on account of its vigorous growth and profusion of leaves. It is sensitive to frost and is often killed to the ground, but sprouts up quickly. Where a screen of vines is wanted, this is one of the best. If killed to the ground it will not bloom that season, for the flowers come on new growth that starts from last year's wood. When not hurt by cold, it will literally cover itself with a cloud of small flowers about one and one-half inches in diameter. The color is peculiar, being an almost transparent waxen white,

sometimes with a slight greenish tinge. The blossoms resemble small single roses in general appearance. They have a powerful odor which is unpleasant to some people.

I have barely touched upon the list of desirable plants for home adornment, and have not mentioned any of the more common species. The subject is so vast that it is impossible, within the limits of a paper that would be suitable on such an occasion, to do more than skim over the surface.

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#### DISCUSSION.

Mr. Henderson.—When I first came to this part of the State I saw in Gainesville a very beautiful vine on a veranda, I called at the lady's door and asked for some and she called it the coral vine. This seems to be the common name for it. It begins blooming in June but is killed by frost. One thing I think of value about it is that it is the very best flower for bees that I have ever seen. It does not seem to be very fragrant but the bees will work on it while it is in bloom. The flowers are shaped something like the sweet pea and are of a dark pink color. I would like to know what it is. I think it worthy of consideration.

Mr. Steele.—There is a common vine here known as *Rosa Montana*, I thought probably, from your description that it was your coral vine. But from the dark pink color it is not the same. The proper name of the vine (*rosa montana*) is *antigonon leptopus*.