ORNAMENTALS FOR FLORIDA.

Best Varieties of Trees, Shrubs and Plants for Ornamental Purposes—Mistakes to be Avoided.

Paper prepared and read by E. N. Reasoner, Oneco, Fla., being the report of the Standing Committee on Ornamentals.

[SEE MINUTES PAGES 1 TO 5, ITEM 18.]

(President Taber: Mrs. Mary Lyman Phelps was the chairman of this committee, but on account of her death her name does not appear on the program.)

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen: During the past three weeks I have been thinking what I should say on the subject of Ornamentals, and yet cannot suggest anything new. There are three very common and widespread errors made in planting that thrust themselves on our attention and demand a lessening.

1st. New places cleared of every vestige of plant life by contract.

2nd. Planting moisture-loving trees and shrubs on dry, thirsty soil, and vice versa.

3rd. Trying to get quick results in setting large stock at unsuitable times of the year.

We have all noticed these three mistakes frequently and perhaps are to blame for one or more of them ourselves. By all means every piece of land selected for a home place or a garden of shrubs, should be examined carefully, and all choice specimens of trees, shrubs or plants marked for reserve. Shade trees are necessary in our warm climate, and the best native oaks, bays, and other shade giving trees found on such land will be far better than many which could be set later. On our own two lawns are magnificent hickories, oaks and cabbage palmettoes from 25 to 100 years old already grown for us without waiting. Some of our neighbors on same kind of land cut off everything before building their houses and now are nursing small and sickly trees where giants formerly stood. A judicious thinning out, is, of course, necessary, if the trees are crowded too thickly, to allow more perfect forms and artistic after effect.

I have tried growing plants that naturally grew in water, or in moist spots, on dry land, and occasionally with partial success, but to do the best, we must set plants on suitable soil and try to follow nature’s ways. People who live on dry ridges persist in trying to grow water lilies, and ignore cactus and succulents, which would thrive wonderfully with little care. The opposite is probably just as frequent, the heavy summer rains scalding or drowning
specimens on low land, that require perfect drainage and a dry top soil.

The third mistake is most often made by hotels and land companies, who try to turn a barren waste into a park or pleasure ground. “Haste makes waste” we will recall when we think of many such attempts as this. Just for an instance, I will mention the Tampa Bay Hotel where thousands of dollars were spent in vain in transplanting immense palmettoes, orange trees, etc., which are now only a memory. I do not say that large trees cannot be moved successfully, but I do say emphatically, that transplanting must be done at a proper time. Oaks will not live if set after they commence their spring growth, and all such trees should be moved early, preferably in December, so that root growth can be made before warm growing weather begins. In setting evergreens less cutting is necessary if leaves are clipped off. Magnolias, Bays and Loquats are prominent examples that should have every leaf removed in transplanting. Cutting to a good form and taking out small branches must be done with all trees and shrubs that require training.

There are five other points I will touch on that are pertinent to this subject. Tropical plants that sprout up readily after freezes. Ease in protecting plants by banking with soil. Setting tender plants deeply to ensure safety to adventitious buds during freezing weather. Native trees as a rule better for shade than exotic; and lawns and bordering hedges.

Among plants that come up readily again after being frozen are, Acalypha, Allemanna, Alocasia, Alpinia, Bauhinia, Bignonia, Bougainvillea, Caesalpinia, Cestrum, Clerodendron, Galphimia, Goldfussia, Habrothamus, Hamelia, Hedychium, Heliconia, Hibiscus, Ixora, Jacaranda, Jasminum, Justicia, Meyenia, Murraya, Nerium, Plumeria, Poinsettia, Tabernaemontana, Thevetia, Thunbergia and hundreds of others less known. This list can be indefinitely extended by following the next two suggestions: that of setting tender plants deeply, and banking slightly just before cool weather. In setting out any plant from a flower pot, it should be set deep enough to allow new roots to form above the ball of soil and to keep this ball down in moist earth. After being frozen to the natural level, such a plant will throw up sprouts from adventitious buds that were below the danger line.

As to my statement in regard to native trees being better than exotic, I will ask where are the thousands of Grevillias, Eucalyptus, half hardy Acacias and like trees, that were planted once so extensively? There are in every county of Florida as fine trees for shade or ornament as could be desired, which are too often neglected and attention given to inferior trees. To be sure, we want variety and choice foreign plants, but let the mainstay be our best natives, and plant less of those we know little of. There is no state of the Union that could show finer results if we gave more attention to our native growth, and I believe Florida people are more alive to this fact than they were before our two '95 freezes.

We have been trying St. Lucie grass on part of one of our lawns, and find it an excellent lawn grass. It is somewhat coarser than Bermuda, but similar in habit of growth. It is more easily eradicated, however, and thrives in both partially shady and sunny situations. A wide range as to moisture can be allowed also and watering is unnecessary, except on the highest and
driest white sand. If one commences watering it has to be kept up continually, as the roots are only on the surface; if on the contrary no water is given, the grass roots penetrate farther and resist drought. Clippings of the grass and fallen leaves are best left on the surface as they form a mulch and in our cases we have found it satisfactory. We grow St. Augustine grass and find it unequalled for very shady spots; it requires less cutting than St. Lucie or Bermuda, and holds less dew, thereby being drier and preferred by many.

By all means grass of some good variety should be planted around every house, no matter how small an area is available, as it covers the bare sand, reduces temperature, and is beautiful if kept trimmed. The most beautiful and artistic boundary for a lawn is a well kept hedge, yet there is scarcely a good hedge of any sort known in Florida. Why we do not see them is a mystery to me, as we can grow so many choice plants in hedges here easily. Among the best subjects for ornamental are Chinese arbor vitae, European and Downy myrtles, Cape Jessamines, Oleander, Privet, Carolina laurel-cherry, various hollies and so on. For defensive hedges Citrus trifoliata, the hardy trifoliate orange is most excellent, also Paliurus aculeatus, the Christ-thorn of Italy. Both are very thorny, hardy and of easy growth. Clipping is necessary twice each year at first to keep the hedge in good form. Hedges of roses are handsome when kept up, but require different treatment than upright growing shrubs. We have never had much experience with them and would much like to see a really good one in South Florida.

THE NEW METHOD OF WARFARE AGAINST SCALE INSECTS.

Spraying—Fungus Parasites of the Mealy Wing—The Turtle Back Scale—The Purple Scale and Long Scale—The Red Scale—The Wax Scale Methods of Artificially Spreading Scale Insect Fungi.

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[SEE MINUTES PAGES 1 TO 5, ITEM 50.]

GENERAL DISCUSSION.

In the development of civilization plants became gradually to be cultivated extensively. This concentration of numerous plants of the same kind in small territory led to the easy spread of diseases, and it soon became important to treat these, if the plants were to be successfully cultivated. Our ancestors were thus early led to the study of plant diseases, and the beginning of the science dates back several centuries. True, the methods employed at that time