

## GARDENING

**I** WRITE THIS on 11th. JANUARY much better than those from the shops. as the Editor needs my copy so that the February/March issue can be produced in good time. We have had lots and lots of rain, wind in abundance and for January, almost unbelievable temperatures during the day up to 60 degrees F. and at night up to 48 and 50. Let us hope that our shrubs do not break too early to be burnt off by the frosts.

The vegetable growing enthusiasts seem to be limited to allotment holders and those that have large gardens and room to cultivate a vegetable patch. But do we need a vegetable patch? Vegetables can be colourful and can be mixed in flower beds to advantage. Lettuces, which grow quickly are in many colour and leaf variations and beetroots make a very attractive showing. Best of all is the use of runner beans in a border. They are very bright, especially Painted Lady with red and white flowers. Grow them in small pyramids or against the fence. Even carrots can be a pleasant background when mixed in with bright coloured annuals.

So for this coming century, first of all you will need a lawn for you to sit and enjoy your leisure and for the children to play. Next, find room for about a dozen strawberry plants, three or four blackcurrant bushes a gooseberry and perhaps some raspberries. And then the vegetables. They are worth growing even in small quantities for they taste so

Now, when the ground dries out, prepare that needed for sowing flowers and vegetables. Good Friday or thereabouts is the time for early potatoes, broad beans, cabbage, lettuces, radishes or anything that you have room for. And, of course, time to fill in with the spring sown annuals.

March is pruning time for roses. For HTs take out any weak or diseased growth and reduce strong growth to about eight inches. The same for floribundas except that the main growth should be taken back to fifteen inches or thereabouts.

Remember to cut forsythia to take into the house – about a dozen pieces in a nice big vase.

May I end by looking forward to next November. There is an autumn flowering snowdrop called *galanthus reginae-olgae*. It is usually in bloom before the end of November and flowers for about two months. The first flowers come before the leaves show. It needs dry conditions and a bit of winter sunshine helps. Ideally a small group should be transplanted about now when the plants are seeding. If you know someone who grows this snowdrop go and beg a handful - well worth while. Of course, you could buy the bulbs if you can find them!

Happy gardening,

A.V. Mitchell