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## MARKET GARDENING.

## THE SOIL MIXTURE FOR CUCUMBERS.

THERE can be no doubt that the best results in the cultivation of Cucumbers are obtained with turf that has been in stack for twelve months, kept free from all weeds whatever and under cover. This will seem easier to try than to do, which I fully admit; such turf, however, providing it is kept dry and free from herbage, will be entirely free from nematodes, worms, and insect pests. What to do the first year, when, of course, no such soil is available, is to mix newly-dug, turfy loam with fresh horse-dung, using enough of the latter to set up strong heat in the body of loam, and after a few days to turn the heap, putting the outside into the middle in re-forming the heap, and then leave it for a week or two, after which space of time, there will be no insect left alive, providing the work has been properly done. Another method when no horse-dung is available, is to employ lime and soot, mixing these with the soil, which, as I have proved by experience, frees the soil from the insects that are the bane of the Cucumber-grower. Another method is to bake the sods made up into a stack on the top of a garden boiler, which however cannot be put in practice where large quantities of soil are required.

If a certain amount of fresh stable-dung be employed in the mixture, and it is at once brought into the Cucumber-house, it will heat slightly for a short time, and much more so if warm water be applied to it. When turf cannot be obtained cheaply, the best of what there is has to be made, and an effort made to make it fit for the purpose. Cucumber soil usually contains a large percentage of manure, and the absence of fibre in the mould is of less importance. The materials should be in a rough, unsifted state that will let water pass freely away, and remain in that condition for a few months. Cucumbers will succeed in it; whatever other ingredient is lacking can be added afterwards.

The market-growers and private gardeners like to see strong growth of leaf and shoot, but it is possible to make the soil too rich for the plants by supplying too much nitrogen in the soil; and seeing that soil in the form of top-dressing has to be employed, artificial fertilisers beyond what the soil mixture contains should not be used at first unless the soil is known to be poor or not quite suitable.

A Cucumber plant in full bearing takes from the ground principally nitrogen, potash, and phosphoric acid, and if these in the proper quantities could be added to the soil, good results would follow; but if we were to add any of these elements in excess of the demands of the plants, bad results would ensue. With too much nitrogen in the soil, the plants form very gross shoots and foliage, and do not crop so freely as short-jointed, moderate-sized shoots and leaves will do, and the fruit will take longer in reaching a usable size. The grower should test his fruit now and again, and the flavour will tell him if any mistake has been made in the treatment of the plants. A well grown Cucumber freshly cut has a pleasant flavour. Too much phosphoric acid in the mixture might be a gain in quality, but the fruit would be classed as seconds (in size) only; yet nothing would sooner stop the production of fruit than lack of phosphoric acid in the soil. Again, if too much potash is used the plants will not last for any length of time, and they will not, as the gardener says,

"break freely." The Cucumber-plants will absorb large quantities of potash to their detriment, and the cultivator must cut back the bine considerably. It should be remembered that some kinds of soil contain an abundance of potash, and manure may also be present.

From all this it will be seen that the making of a suitable Cucumber-compost is not an easy matter. The gardener should find out in what elements his soil is lacking and supply these, which is true of all cultures; but particularly with that of Cucumbers. A capital fertiliser for mixing with Cucumber soil is charred garden refuse, which is rich in potash and mineral salts, and is useful in imparting porosity.

Lime in some form is another necessary addition to a Cucumber-compost if it be not naturally found in the soil, as in the case of loams from chalky districts. If we see young plants when still in the pots producing

from November to January, while the earliest Pseudo-Narcissus does not begin to flower till the end of February. But as I planted the bulbs of the first specimen (Paper-white) in December, it flowered here at the same time as the latter (Daffodil), and so their fecundation was somewhat easily effected.

The following is a description of the hybrid:—

Bulb globose, somewhat smaller than that of the mother, covered with thin, light brown tunics. Leaf linear, light green, not glaucous; 1 to 1½ ft. long about ½ to 1 in. broad. Peduncle shorter than the leaves, about a foot long, or a little longer, veined with two prominent edges; flowering from February to March. Pedicels irregular, shorter than the spathe. Flowers two or three, closely united, fragrant. Perianth milky-white, ascending, tube funnel-shaped, green on the base outwards; segments concave, acute, as long as the tube; corona cup-shaped, truncate, about half as long as the segments, milky-white on their base, sulphur-yellow on the upper part. Stamens and style variable, the latter much shorter than the stamens. Quite sterile, as I believe.

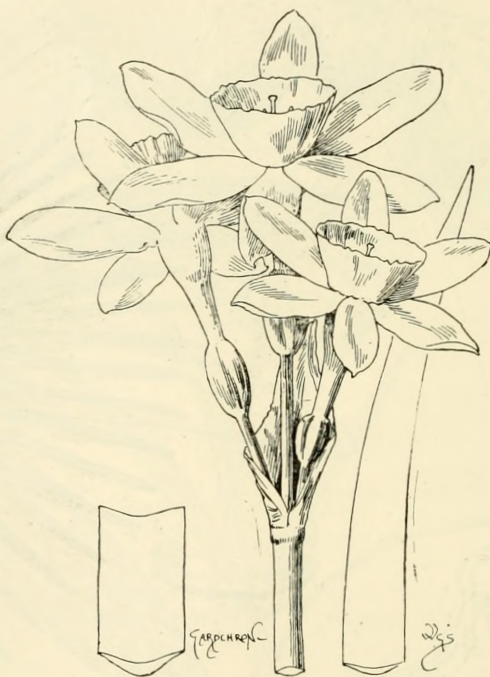


FIG. 52.—NARCISSUS MARGARITE "IOLANDA."

flowers, it might safely be taken that it does contain enough lime. A disadvantage in the use of lime is that it sets part of the ammonia free. If the soil is clayey, lime will form a very good addition [but it should take the form of quicklime, and be distributed throughout the soil whilst it is still in the heap, and before it is put on to the beds. ED.]. A. A. Fabius, Redlands Nursery, Emsworth.

## HYBRID NARCISSI.

NARCISSUS × MARGARITE "IOLANDA" (NARCISSUS PAPYRACEUS × PSEUDO-NARCISSUS), (see fig. 52).

AMONGST my new hybrid Narcissus are some very fine and graceful specimens, flowering at the end of February, and to-day (March 4) in their full glory. It was somewhat difficult to hybridise the two different species, as *N. papyraceus*, known in gardens under the old name of "Paper-white Narcissus," flowers very early here

This very fine hybrid Narcissus flowers here in my garden near Saint Elmo luxuriantly, and will become, when more known, a favourite, if it prove hardy in English gardens; but that is doubtful. Ch. Sprenger.

NARCISSUS × SPRENGERI, Baker, in *Gardeners' Chronicle*, var. VOMERENSIS (*N. TENORII* × *PSEUDO-NARCISSUS*), (fig. 53.)

Bulb very large, ovoid. Leaves six or more, broad, linear, somewhat glaucous, erect, or ascending, flattish, much longer than the peduncle; this is about 1¼ ft. long, striated, cylindrical, with two slightly prominent edges, flowering in February to March. Pedicels irregular, shorter than or as long as the spathe. Perianth spreading, or slightly ascending; tube large, funnel-shaped, longer than the segments. Segments ovate-oblong, acute, ascending, pale sulphur-yellow. Corona fine golden-yellow, as long as the segments, cylindrical, erect, sometimes plicate, undulate, irregular, crenate. Stamens and style very short. Stamens erect, much longer than the style, inserted low down the tube, but deeper than in the pseudo-Narcissus. Flowers mostly three on the stalk, very fine, fragrant.

As it seems, this hybrid is quite sterile. A very splendid garden hybrid, of great interest. It is in flower here now for the first time.

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NARCISSUS × SPRENGERI, Baker, VAR. ELMENSIS (N. TENORII × PSEUDO-NARCISSUS VAR.), (fig. 54).

Bulb large, ovoid. Leaves four to six, linear, glaucous, erect, canaliculate. Peduncle shorter than the leaves, with two prominent edges; flowers produced from February to March. Pedicels irregular, shorter than the spathe. Perianth horizontal, not ascending; tube greenish-yellow, funnel-shaped, as long as the segments. Segments splendid lemon-yellow, spatulate, undulate-acute, longer than the corona. Corona golden-yellow, cylindrical, erect, plicate, irregularly incise-crenate as is the case in the flowers of the male parent. Stamens and style much shorter than the corona. Stamens not erect. Style much longer than the stamens. Flowers very fragrant.

A magnificent new hybrid, flowering for the first time. Ch. Sprenger, Naples.

of seeing for themselves what is being done with Primulas and Cyclamens.

With double-flowered varieties of the first, great progress has been made, which renders the plants of this section more easy of cultivation as compared with the older method pursued with the ordinary double-flowering Primula. No fewer than six distinct varieties are now in commerce. Added to this, a double-flowered form of The Duchess has been obtained which cannot fail to become popular, possessing as it does the colour of that variety.

Much progress, too, has been made with the Carnation flaked strain, in which formerly there was so much more white than purple;

maintains its place for the purity of the white flowers, even the latest exhibit no tinge of any other colour, and it is quite the earliest to flower where early-flowering bright coloured Primulas are valued; the variety Reading Scarlet is indispensable. Very fine are the individual blooms of Reading Blue and Cambridge Blue, which have but few leaves, and the style of growth is very effective and the plants very dwarf, and of remarkable freedom in flowering. Rosy Queen, a Fern-leaved variety, is desirable, the habit good. The Duchess is still as fine as when introduced in 1900, and is perhaps the showiest Primula, the rosy-carmine centre being so telling a feature.

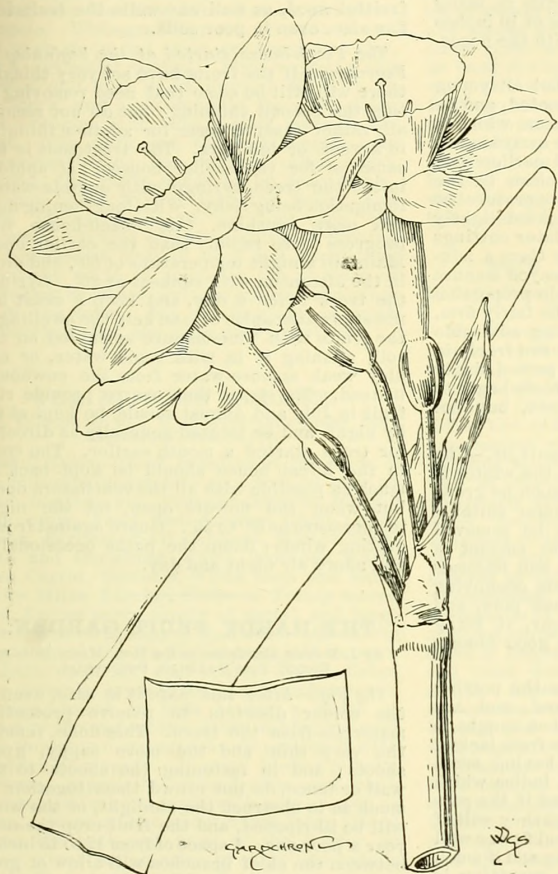


FIG. 53.—NARCISSUS SPRENGERI VOMERENSIS.  
(SEE P. 172.)

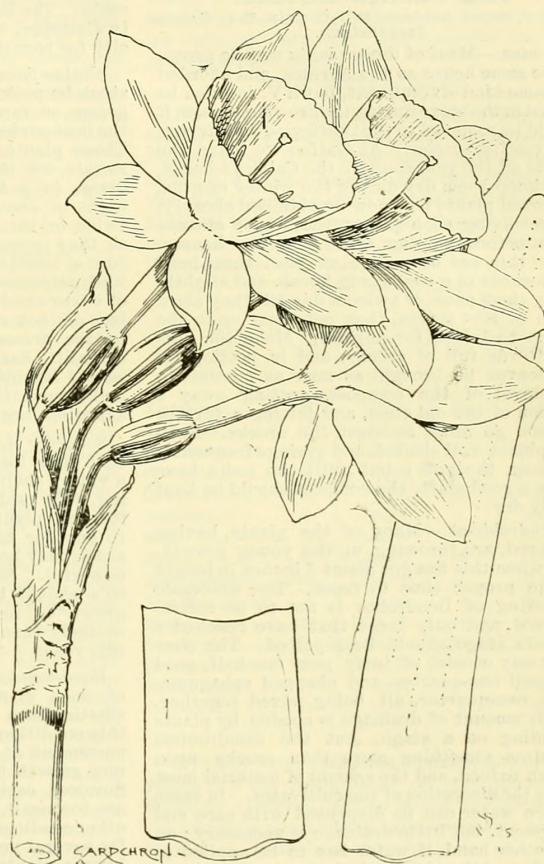


FIG. 54.—NARCISSUS SPRENGERI ELMENSIS.

## NURSERY NOTES.

### PRIMULAS AND CYCLAMENS AT MESSRS. SUTTON AND SONS'.

A CHARMING contrast to the weather outside was afforded by the houses on the occasion of a recent visit. The Primulas were in full flower, but the Cyclamens had been at their best shortly before.

It may be the last time that we shall see this yearly display in their present quarters. As happens in most well-conducted businesses, Messrs. Sutton have found the demands of their customers have outgrown the capabilities of the existing premises, and they contemplate removing the glasshouses to a much more commodious site.

A few lines on what came under notice may have an interest for many readers of these pages, who may not have had the opportunity

but now the flaking is much more decided. The flowers of this strain are especially telling by artificial light. The white-flowering forms with dark leaf-stems are also found more effective on the plants than those varieties having green leaves and stems. The deeply-fringed flowers come in compact trusses on short stems, and are freely produced. The improved double scarlet is now as rich in colour as Crimson King, which is one of the brightest of Primulas.

Among single-flowered forms there were many handsome types observed, but the one which struck me most was Pearl, a variety that still holds its own. Twenty-one years have elapsed since Sutton introduced this variety, and it is still a very popular variety. The plant is of robust growth, and the flowers come in large trusses, making it a very effective plant.

Royal White is another favourite; Snowdrift

The giant single-flowered forms, in a variety of colours, are a distinct gain; the magnificent flower-trusses and flowers, some of the latter 3 inches in diameter, render this type very valuable in decorative work. Giant Pink, Giant Crimson, and Royal White are desirable forms, the first being especially effective.

Star Primulas have a future before them, seeing what a great variety of colour has been obtained, and how useful they are for cutting. No fewer than seven distinct colours are offered. White Queen is especially free; Mont Blanc, with dark Fern-leaves, is become a very popular variety. A Primula having flowers white, splashed with purple flakes is attractive; pink and salmon colours are pleasing. Giant White produces flowers fully 1½ inch in diameter, remarkable for great substance in the segments. Carmine is, perhaps, the most desirable in the star sections under artificial

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