

MAKING A ROCK GARDEN

I've edited the format of the entire text of a fabulous little vintage gardening book I'd like to know to create a beautiful and authentic rock garden. Very easy to understand and to design one. I've edited out most of the spacers and book page numbers referred to.

I consider this publication to be the best instructional book on designing a rock garden. The black and white photos, illustrations and text are original to the book, as published. References mentioned using the USDA Hardiness Map and choose your rock garden plants accordingly.

This book, in its entirety, provided by marysbloomers.com

MAKING A ROCK GARDEN

By H. S. ADAMS

THE HOUSE & GARDEN MAKING BOOKS



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A nearly buried boulder is easily converted into a beautiful little rock garden with soil and plant there and around the edges of the boulder *Phlox subulata*.

THE ROCK GARDEN

In Europe, particularly in England, the rock garden is an established institution with a distinct following and considerable bibliography.

On this side of the Atlantic, the rock garden is so little understood that it is an almost unconsidered feature. There are a few notable rock gardens in this country, all on large estates, and in more instances some excellent ones on a complicated scale either by actual creation or by taking advantage of natural opportunities. But for the most part, the vision principally to the so-called "rockery."

Now a rockery, with all the good intentions lying behind it, is not a rock garden. It is no more a rock garden than a wood would be a wood. A rockery is generally a lot of stones stuck in a pile of soil or, worse yet, a circular

A rock garden, above all else, is not artificial; at least, so far as appearance goes. It is a garden which has been disposed by nature or the hand of man; but always the effect is naturalistic, if not actually natural.

Rock gardens are of so many legitimate—in other words, natural—types, that there is not the slightest excuse, finding a use for stray stones, falls to the ground. Any close observer of nature is familiar with the patches of alpine plants above the timber line in high mountains down the lower slopes and through the valleys. Infrequently they come down to the very sea, while sweet waters commonly define and, what is better,

pool, there a brook. The bog, too, the heath and the desert, they take unto themselves, though perhaps by a ponderous effort, raise up massive masonry in orderly fashion; one day disorder comes and nature reclaims the garden. Rome's Coliseum and the ruins of Kenilworth Castle are only two of the unnumbered examples.

Here, in a nutshell, are not only the natural variations of the rock garden, but the inspiration. No rock gardener that did not depend upon a study of those that nature has given the world in prodigal abundance could have simply seen and made use of his observations.

The advantages of a rock garden are, primarily, an element of picturesqueness that nothing else can be grown. Some of the loveliest flowers on earth that, if they flourish at all, will never do as well in the garden as they do in approximating their natural habitat. Also it may be made a pleasure of extraordinary attractiveness. Many things to be learned about the rock garden—it is the veritable key to the garden situation; there are so many things to be learned indeed it is possible.

THE CHOICE OF A SITE

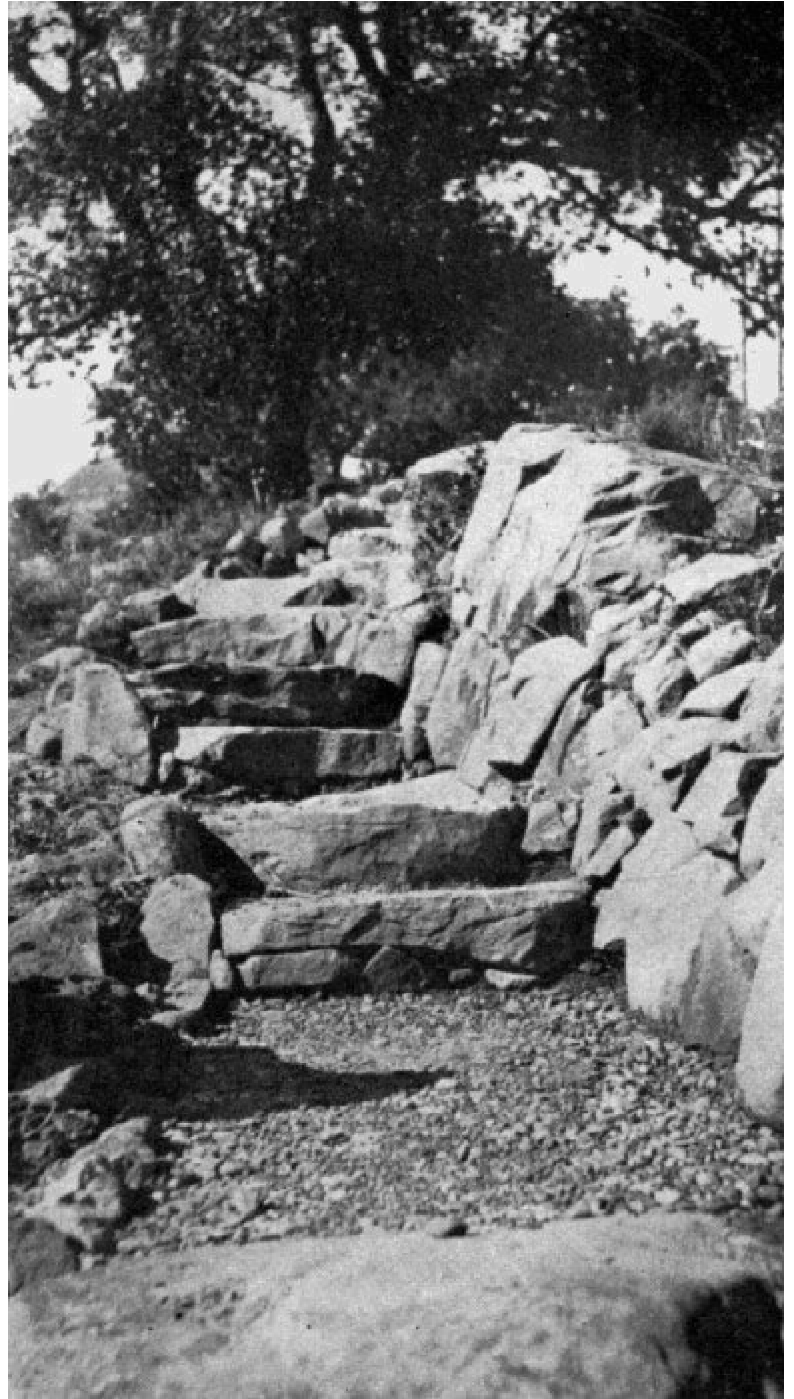
The best site for a rock garden is where it ought to be. That is a sad truth, for it eliminates some hopes that might be saved if this is recognized at the outset. First cast your eye about and see if you have a spot where a rock garden would be the supreme test. If one does not seem to belong there, give up the idea philosophically and take it elsewhere.

As a rule a rock garden should not be near the house; it is something savoring of the wild that does not belong near the house. If the house is on a rocky site that makes such planting desirable, if not imperative, and a slope from the house is steep enough to permit of a sharp break in the general landscape treatment. Save in these circumstances, a rock garden is not so hard as it sounds; even on a small place, the spot is easily concealed by a planting of shrubs.

Nor should the rock garden, any more than the rockery, be in the lawn unless it is depressed and the depression may be a natural or an artificial one, it may be a brook with high banks or it may be a surface depression. If of it is better yet, and preferable to either is a bank sloping down from it. The bank on either side of the depression is a possibility to be considered.

Trees need not be altogether avoided; sometimes they are essential to the pictorial effect. It is not wise to plant trees. The drip is bad, especially for alpine plants, and the greedy roots not only rob the plants of nourishment but also may damage the rocks.

Creating A Rock Garden



Wherever possible make the entrance to the rock garden a rough flight of steps. Excavate if necessary. Plant the sides in the crevices as well as those of the side walls

Somewhere just outside the real garden is the best place; then it is only a step from one little world in a garden leads to a bit of wood, either directly or through a wild garden, there will be all the more to recommend it. The more wood suggests, the better; a rock garden not only should have no straight lines, but it is not well that all of it be straight. It matters whether the area be large or small.

What constitutes a good site is well illustrated by one of the existing American rock gardens. The plain is level for a considerable distance and then drop with a fairly steep bank to a driveway, below which being continuous, however, the bank above the driveway is broken by a little glen, seemingly leading to a lawn and the formal garden. In this glen is the rock garden, or rather the main part of it. Though bounded by the formal garden and on the south by the lawn, the rock garden can be seen from neither of these, nor is it distinctly apart from all. A thin planting of evergreens screens it on the south and east sides, and the driveway. The rock garden overflows the glen and runs along the bank on either side, the shady section being on the north. Across the driveway there is more rock garden and then a short stretch of dry wall garden. Such a site on any grounds with a bank, and a little imagination, and a glen is a mere matter of shoveling soil. Call it a favored rock garden form; so are hill and crest.

Thus far the assumption has been that the rocks have to be gathered up from various parts of the plain, especially those of country places, have the rocks; often more than are wanted. Although sometimes blasting and rearranging is about as great as if all the stone had to be found. It does, nevertheless, not matter, naturally, there they ought to be. Occasionally the rocks are so disposed that there is no choice; the site is of it.

A single boulder, a few scattered rocks, or a rocky bank can be converted into a simple rock garden and the transformation is complete.

A rock garden with water is a rock garden glorified. Wherever possible, without injury to the main scheme, failing that, bring the water to it, if this is practicable; which can be determined when the site is picked.

THE WORK OF CONSTRUCTION

Spring is the best time to make a rock garden. When the important matter of the proper site has been decided upon the definiteness of this scheme, much of the success of the rock garden will depend. Here depends so much what you want as what is best in the circumstances.

Do not attempt slavishly to copy the rock garden of some one else. All the money in the world would not have made no two rocks precisely alike. Study them, of course; get all the ideas you can. But study first your own neighborhood. Anywhere there is abundant opportunity. Take a leaf or two from the book concerning the art of making rock gardens, with a bit of water thrown in. They make use of comparatively few blocks of stone in disposition of rocks with simple effectiveness, in the simulation of height and distance, in the proper selection of trees and shrubs as are suitable for a rock garden scheme.

Measure carefully the space at command, and then lay out the plan on cross-ruled paper. Call each part made easy. Next, figure out a good entrance, and, if possible, an equally good exit—the one invisible should be as devious as the situation allows, and, if byways cannot be added, provide for bays, or make use not merely to simulate nature; you are, by a process of compressing much in little, to epitomize it.

Then comes the selection of the rocks. Usually the rock close at hand, perhaps on the very grounds, enough to own any, very likely there is more than one townsman who will be glad to give you all the rocks, only remove them from spots where they are not desired. The cost of removal, even in the case of boulders,

Barring quartz rock, which does not look well, almost any kind of natural stone may be made use of if not shunned like the plague. Limestone and sandstone are good materials; granite is better. Granite, however, if not desired, another stone must be selected. A good plan is to use more than one kind, but to keep them

material, and, in general, it is well to have the rock look anything but newly quarried. Pick out some r that this is not disturbed by the moving.



Good rock garden planting. Each of the principal species has a soil pocke effective background and irregular crevices

Boulders may run up to several tons in weight. Where none is readily obtainable, one can be simulat concealing the joints by the planting of such things as stonecrops in earth—which, save in rare case: construction of a rock garden in place of mortar.

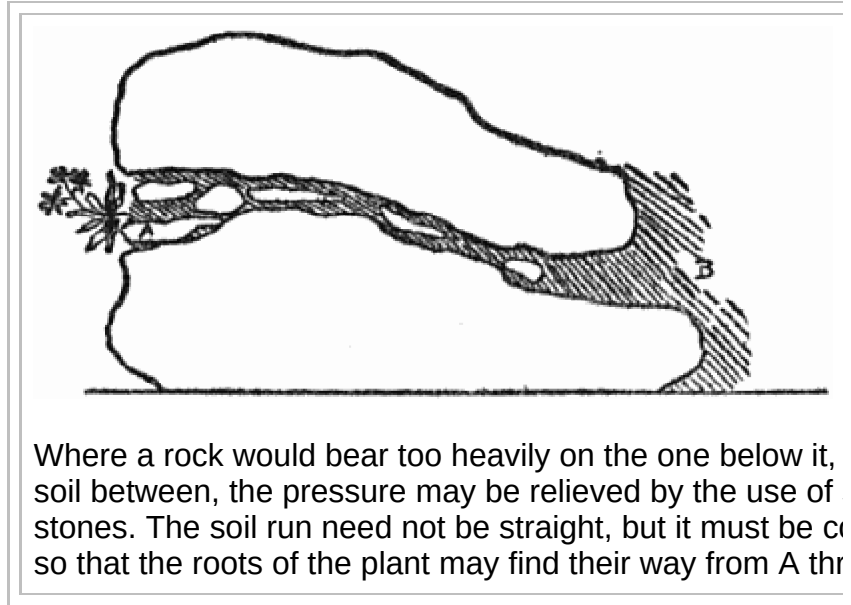
If the site is level, the next step is to change all that—first on paper. Unless the lay of the land is all ri must not depend wholly upon the upbuilding; there must be some excavations, but no depressions d will want to walk.

Aside from the path levels, building begins with the rocks, not with the soil. This is a highly important effects. Aside from that, the heaviest work will be out of the way. Then start in with the outlining base surface to the ground and should vary in size. It is not essential that the lowest rocks shouldbe slightl

When the paths and outer margins have been thus defined, scatter more rocks over the intervening together. Next, fill in with soil, packing it firmly and ramming it hard into every crevice. If it fits in with work well in order to pack the soil, and when resuming the labor on the morrow, to add more soil, we

layer of rock.

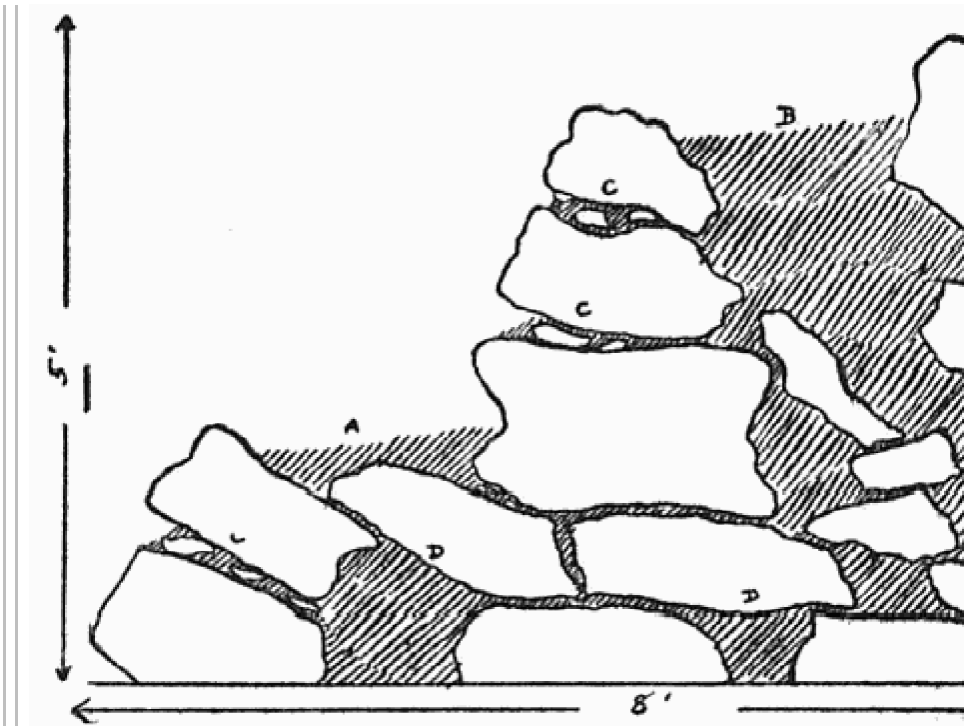
This second layer should have the rocks placed with the front edge slightly back from that of the lower layer. The overhang may be fashioned if required for a certain plant known to abhor a drip from above. The corner height is reached. The height is entirely arbitrary, but some points should be at least as high as the level of the garden. The pleasure of enjoying some of the typical rock plants without stooping. The rocks used are of various strength, but care must be taken to contrive plenty of long soil runs. Eighteen inches should be the maximum length of a soil run, but its roots are likely to be found for a yard or so. It is because of this deep penetration of roots that the soil should be packed so very firmly, striking a hidden hollow.



At no point between two stones should the layer of soil be less than two or three inches thick after being pressed down too heavily and crush the plant roots, this may be avoided by placing small stones here and there between these stones, but there must be a continuous, though not necessarily straight, soil run from the front to the back. The soil should slope downward slightly.

Rocks calculated to simulate a natural stratification ought to be laid on an incline for proper drainage. Small stones should be placed sparsely in wedging, and in the making of the so-called "pockets."

These pockets are of prime importance in the construction of a rock garden. They hold the only consistent colonizing plants, thus providing for pronounced color effects. They should break the slopes and be irregular. They may be easily subdivided by small stones when the planting is done if a further separation of soil is desired. The top, so that there will be no standing water.



Cross-section of rock garden construction, showing shallow (A) and deep (B) pockets; tilting and wedging of rocks (C); bridging (D), and perpendicular joints (E). Two to three inches of soil between all joints. The lowest rock is buried.

The drainage of a rock garden is of vital importance. There must be plenty of moisture stowed away and excess must be carried away. The garden should drain naturally, as the hills do. If any doubt exists, before starting to lay the stones.

The soil should be a good loam with a little peat, and stones varying in size from a mustard seed to a football should be old.

PLANTING THE GARDEN

There are two ways of planting a rock garden. One is to do all the crevice planting along with the building until the rocks are in place and the soil thoroughly settled.

The former plan is a singularly appealing, as well as practical, one. There is something fascinating in the way a plant grows along. The practical advantage lies chiefly in the fact that by this method good-sized plants may be found. The soil in that case should be put part way in the crevice and packed down. Then some loose soil sprinkled from the roots, unless it has a tap root, laid down horizontally with the crown just outside the edge of the rock. Then fill up the crevice with more soil, packed well, and follow with more plants of the same kind. Use small plants if necessary. Plants that hang down should be placed in the higher crevices; this must be all thought out in advance.

As a matter of fact, the planting plan cannot be too thoroughly thought out in advance. At a point after the plan is made in accord with the requirements of what may be called the more difficult rock plants—the alpinists, some of which are hard work but demand more than the ordinary garden moisture. The best way is to decide what plants are

rule, the difficult or "finicky" ones; there will be plenty of time to experiment with those when you have sections of the rock work and mark on it where the plants are to go. Use numbers, each correspondi



Where only a small effect is desired, a tongue of rock work like this is an e problem. Note the avoidance of straight lines

The general idea is that all the soil shall be concealed, not necessarily at the moment of planting, but you are a collector, variety is of little importance. The main thing is that there shall be beauty as a whole, massed bloom and some green the year round; the garden must never be bare at any time, as nature there is a good planting rule. Colonies, always of marked irregularity, ought to merge into one another, no stones are in sight. Not infrequently some of the best effects are obtained where more rock than 1 contrast of plants, perhaps only a few low-growing ones in a natural pocket, rather than a semi-eclipse: suitable, and easy, species in preference to fifty or more kinds.

Study at the same time the form of the plants that are to be used; some quickly resolve themselves into always grow straight up, some prefer to hang down, and some have foliage that is evergreen or near *ocymoides* will spread out over four square feet of soil, and thus fill completely a moderate-sized pocket three dozen auriculas might have to be used. The same is true of the white rock cress (*Arabis albida*) trailing stonecrops would fill it, perhaps, when a number of rosettes of the smaller kinds of house le

Tall plants, like the foxglove, may sometimes be used, in a small group, at the end of a bay on the low rock work, as a background, or as dominating features of the entrance or exit of the garden. At the edge between the rock garden and the outer grounds. Spreading and trailing plants should be placed a foot or two from the rock work in tufts or rosettes of foliage. If the path is broad enough some of the wide-spreading plants may go at the edge of moderate spread, with a few tufted plants and some that grow upright, but are not tall, to lend vari

size and placing, this growth should fill all the soil space—even between the stones. Such a path will be an undertaking as it may seem.

Obvious considerations are that plants with a decided hankering after moisture or shade should be favored; it is astonishing how adaptive many of them are.

Do not plant the weak next to the strong. Unless you are a gardener of eternal vigilance, the weak will be the first to mistake you have made.

Finally, do not forget that planting is not the end; it is only the beginning—of planting. So long as the Normal mortality will necessitate some, there will be thinning out, and time will suggest additions and changes.

And with the planting goes on the continual care, much of which can be done in the course of the day and will not be felt. Water in case of a real drought, but use a sprinkler, and do not stop until the ground is moist. Surface watering is bad enough in the ordinary garden; in a rock garden it is a fatal error, as the ground has no condition to stand the full force of the summer sun.

Go over the garden thoroughly once a year and all the time keep a sharp lookout for weeds. If the soil is too damp for rock plants. Stone chips placed around a plant will prevent too much dampness lodging about the base during the heavy rains.

PLANTS FOR A ROCK GARDEN

So many plants are suitable for a rock garden that the range of choice is bewildering. In this, as in the case of the ordinary garden, precedence over pure personal desire, though, very fortunately, it is often not difficult to make the two agree on a small lot.

To the beginner, no better advice can be given than that which applies to the picking out of the rocks. By any means, a mere suggestion to follow the lines of least resistance. It is far more. In the first place, a suitable plant life to be had without going far afield. Then again, natural harmonious effects in your garden are appropriate to your grounds. Finally, you can see for yourself how things grow, and as for the hardiness of the plants, it refers not alone to the natural conditions; there is a second wide field in the garden—the hardiness of the plants as they are in the many and learn whether certain plants are too tender or require too much care for your use.

So far as plants native to the immediate neighborhood are concerned, their value to the rock garden is often underestimated. And they are so many and of individual beauty not always appreciated in the bewildering profusion of the wild but plainly apparent in a rock garden. Do not make the rather common mistake of thinking that they are too familiar to be worth growing. Honestly, can you say in your heart that they are?



Native plants are excellent material for the rock garden. The Tiarella flower (*Tiarella cordifolia*) at the top, and one of the smallest ferns at the bottom

For a Connecticut rock garden the Greek valerian (*Polemonium reptans*) must be purchased, unless old-fashioned flowers; there it belongs in that category. But why should you of Minnesota or Missouri garden, simply because you have only to go to the woods for it? The English enthusiast brings home Swiss Alps, and *Dryas Drummondii* from the Canadian Rockies for his rock garden, but he does not find near-by—even the "pale primrose" and the cowslip.

From ferns alone, or from only plants of shrubby growth, a most beautiful native rock garden may be excluding all else, there are limitless opportunities. It goes without saying that A's rock garden in Maine law compelling it to be.

Among the common wild flowers of the East that take on unexpected new beauty when transferred to the garden are the yellow rock cress (*Barbarea majus*), strawberry (*Fragaria Virginica*), cranesbill (*Geranium maculatum*), toadflax (*Linaria vulgaris*), Robert (*Geranium Robertianum*), coltsfoot (*Tussilago Farfara*), Solomon's seal (*Polygonatum biflorum*), and some of the violets. These are but a few names, and random ones are the celandine, and toadflax, spread too rapidly, but by careful watching and not allowing the seed to ripen on such plants that will take all the room in sight if they are allowed to, and they must be watched closely for a good purpose by giving the rock garden a quick start, after which they may easily be reduced or then about discarding. Certain plants, like certain friends, you enjoy having for a visit, but do not care to see

Annuals as a class are not desirable for the rock garden; for one thing, the care of renewal is too great in case there will always be exceptions that are a matter of individual preference. Few, for example, would you use the toadflax of Switzerland (*Linaria alpina*), just because it is a biennial. The main dependence, however, barring accidents, last indefinitely. These should be mostly species; if horticultural, do not use the big Chereau iris. Nor, with rare exceptions, should double flowers be used. A double daffodil looks horrid (*Arabis albida*) will pass.

The easy rock garden plants, where the material is not taken from the wild, are to be found in most cases are natives of Europe or Asia, and more than is commonly suspected are at home in other parts of the world. Of bloom are *Phlox subulata*, *Phlox amoena*, *Aubrietia deltoidea*, maiden pink (*Dianthus deltoides*), blue rock cress (*Polemonium reptans*), woolly chickweed (*Cerastium tomentosum*), creeping thyme (*Thymus serpyllum*), dwarf species of alpine mint (*Calamintha alpina*), and pink, white, and yellow stonecrops (sedum). All of them fairly high, but the flower stalks rise higher. These include white rock cress (*Arabis albida*), the pink (*pl.*), the also permissible double German catchfly (*Lychnis viscaria*), another double flower, "fair maid" bellflower (*Campanula Carpatica*), grass pink (*Dianthus plumarius*), *Iris pumila*, crested iris (*Iris cristata*), *Phlox ovata*, *Phlox repens*, foam flower (*Tiarella cordifolia*), *Veronica incana*, *Alyssum saxifolium* (geum).

Several of the primulas give a like effect if the planting is close—as it should be in a pocket. The best are the *P. veris*, oxlip (*P. elatior*), bird's eye (*P. farinosa*), yellow auricula (*P. auricula*), *P. denticulata*, and *P. auriculata*; plant them, for the most part, under a ground cover so that the soil will not show when the cottage types may be used, if in a solid color, but most to be preferred are the species, such as the small white and yellow the little lady tulip (*Tulipa Clusiana*). Crocuses are also best in type forms, and the small, single, yellow and white. Single white or blue hyacinths may be used, but better than the stiff spikes of bloom of new bulbs will be the "run out" in the border. Other valuable bulbs are the snowdrop, *Scilla Sibirica*, glory-of-the-snow (*Chionodoxa Meleagris*), grape hyacinth (*Muscari botryoides*), *Triteleia uniflora*, *Allium Moly*, and the wood and Sp

Taller plants that may be worked in, oftentimes best with only a single specimen or small clump, are *filamentosa*, leopard's bane (doronicum), single peonies (either herbaceous or tree), German, Japan

pseudacorus), single columbines, *Anemone Japonica*, *Hemerocallis flava*, *Sedum spectabile*, *Dielytra* (*Polemonium Richardsonii*), *fraxinella*, *Anthemis tinctoria*, single *Campanula persicifolia*, *Campanula trachelium*, snapdragon (*antirrhinum*), *platycodon*, lavender (where it is proven hardy), and musk mallow

Of the lilies, *Lilium Philadelphicum*, *L. elegans*, *L. speciosum*, and *L. longiflorum* are all desirable, an *elegans* will be found standing out from the rocks in full sunshine. For peering over into the rock garden, *tigrinum*, and *L. superbum* are recommended.



A rock garden merging into woodland. A curved path is desirable, as it affords vistas

The pick of the low shrubs are the charming *Daphne cneorum*, which flourishes better for being lifted *amœna*. The latter, however, should be so placed that its trying solferino does not make a bad color rock garden well, and with one trailing juniper (*Juniperus procumbens*) will provide a great deal of the

Single roses, the species, fit in well where there is room for them. Good ones are *R. setigera*, *R. rubicunda*. The roses would better be at or near the entrance or exit, or far enough above the rock work

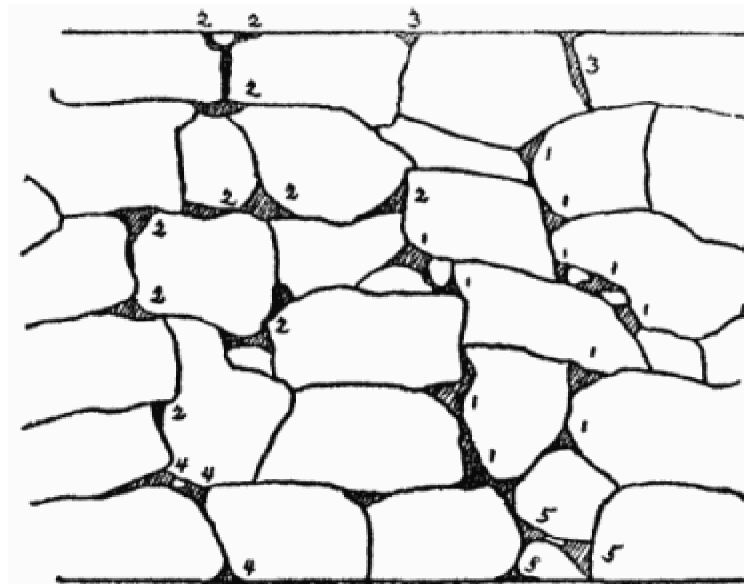
The plants in this list cover all seasons and vary somewhat in their soil and moisture requirements. E garden knowledge. Most will do better if their preferences are considered, but none is apt to perish v

Alpines, as a class, would better be left to the amateur with the time, money, and disposition to spec from a mile or more up in the air to sea level; the edelweiss, for one, grows here readily from seed, a in American rock gardens. But, on the whole, alpines do not do as well here as in England, where they flourish here, it is at the cost of a great amount of professional care.

THE WALL GARDEN

A wall garden is a perpendicular rock garden. But whereas a rock garden is of all things irregular, a wall garden is a straight line; it is better that one end should describe a curve, and rocks at the base may give it further man's handiwork. The prime object of the gardening on it is to reduce this air to a minimum.

The way to make a wall garden is to build a dry wall of rough stones—that is, a wall without mortar. In addition, as well as behind the stones, which should be tilted back a little to carry water into the soil. This tilting method is the best kind is a five-foot retaining wall, as there is then a good body of soil behind to which the roots can reach. A wall may be made, if the situation demands it, by constructing parallel lines of stones and filling in so



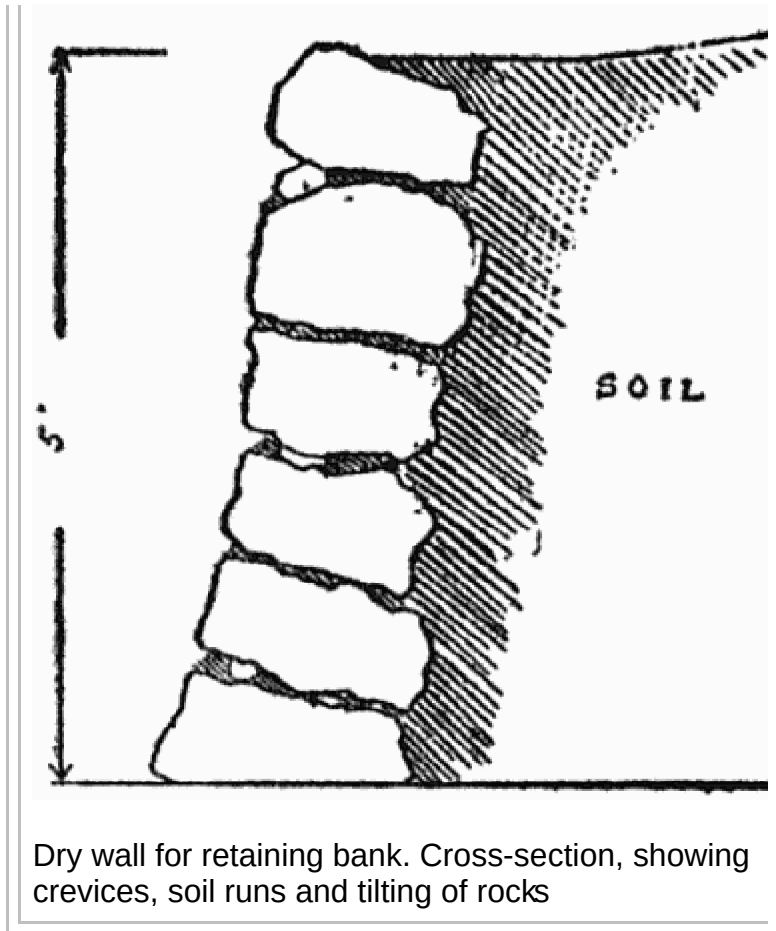
Planting plan of dry wall, the dark portions representing the chief earth-fill are: 1—*Arabis albida*; 2—*Alyssum saxatile*; 3—House leek (sempervivum); 4—*Armeria maritima*; 5—*Armeria maritima*

Creating A Rock Garden



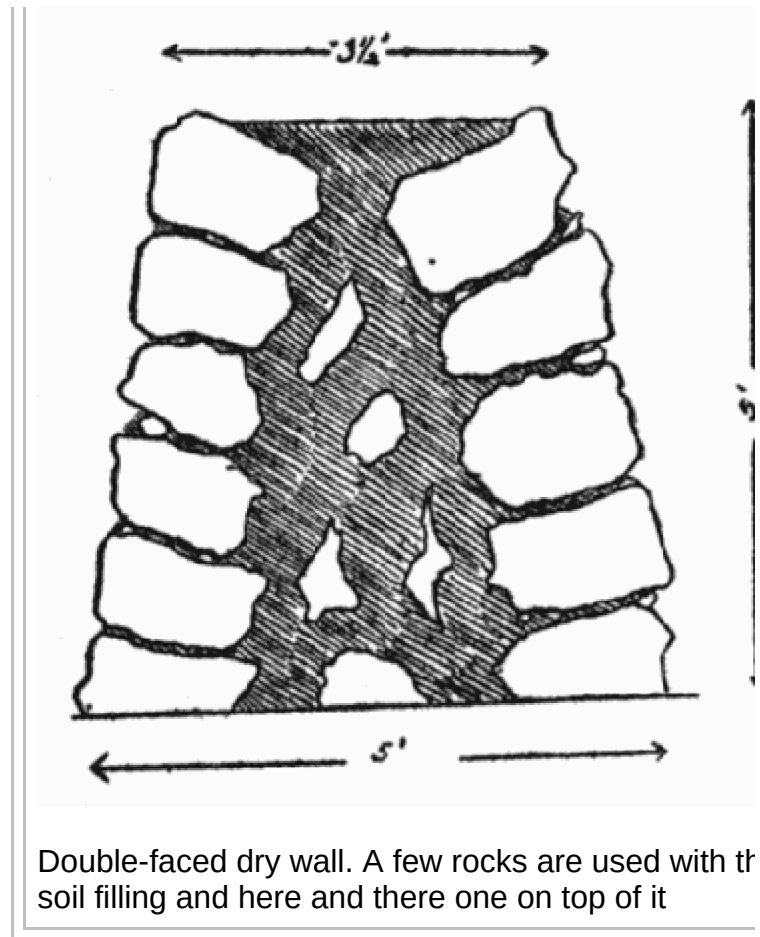
A wall garden planted in colonies—the better way. If not too vigorous of g
planted
as shown here at the base

Although the face of the wall in either case may be strictly perpendicular, it is better that each layer sl
rock garden, laying the stones so that the top will be level, or approximately so.



Dry wall for retaining bank. Cross-section, showing crevices, soil runs and tilting of rocks

In planting also, follow the same rules. It is better to plant as the work progresses. Either plants or soil in the front of the crevices. Small seed may be mixed in thin mud and this plastered on the soil. I



The range of reliable plants that do not call for special care is not great so far as the crevices are concerned. *Coronilla alba*, red valerian (*Centranthus ruber*), aubrietia, *Alyssum saxatile*, snapdragon, wallflower (*Cheiranthus plumarius*, and *Dianthus deltoides* are all very serviceable. Behind the wall, at the top, a strip of earth can be grown. Single Marguerite carnations and grass pinks will form a sort of cascade of foliage and in the crevices of the top, and a similar effect, but much bolder, can be created with the perennial peacock (Athyrium).

If the dry wall is already made, the crevices can be plugged with soil if care and patience are used. If the mortar can be chiseled out and an occasional small stone should be removed.

A wall garden has these advantages over a rock garden; it is more easily constructed, it is of practical use, and other is not.

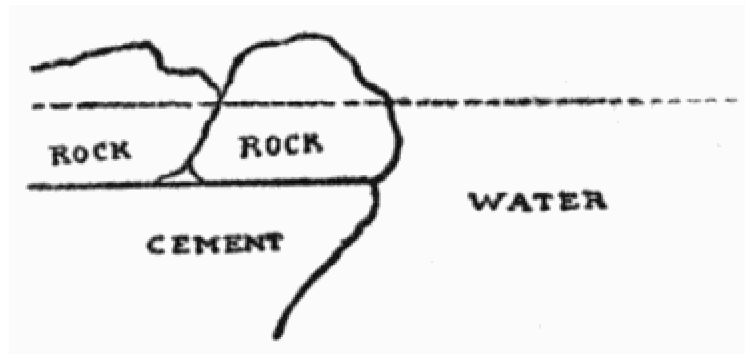
WATER AND BOG GARDENS

Neither the water nor the bog garden is dependent on rocks. Either or both, however, may just as well be used to solve a wet spot problem admirably, permit the culture of native water lilies, orchids, and numerous other beautiful plants. Picturesqueness. If water is lacking, it may often be introduced at little expense.



A little grotto with trickling water makes a picturesque feature in a wall garden. If shady, plant ferns generously

In most cases it will be found that some cement construction is necessary, but not a bit of it should shoulder on the sides of the pool or stream a little below what will be the level of the water, and then shallow water may be disguised by imbedding pebbles and small stones in the cement before it sets



To conceal the cemented bank of a pool or stream, place a shoulder eight inches or so wide and about six inches below the water line. Then place small rocks on the shoulder

Dispose the rocks very irregularly, but they may be so few as to be mere notes. Avoid stagnant water goldfish. They like mosquito larvæ.

Water lilies and sagittaria—one plant will do if the pool is small—in the water and near it, but not in flower, and *Lythrum roseum* are good selections. Forget-me-not is one of the finest plants for the bank (*semperflorens*).

The bog garden simply reproduces bog conditions. As a rock garden adjunct it may be a small spot in which the native cypripediums and pitcher plants flourish. Eighteen or twenty inches of suitable soil, been stirred some sand and gravel, must be provided. If an artificial bog, the bottom may be made of

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