The glorious gladiolus

F Jackson
Department of Agriculture

Follow this and additional works at: https://researchlibrary.agric.wa.gov.au/journal_agriculture3

Part of the Horticulture Commons

Recommended Citation
Available at: https://researchlibrary.agric.wa.gov.au/journal_agriculture3/vol2/iss1/13

This article is brought to you for free and open access by Research Library. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of the Department of Agriculture, Western Australia, Series 3 by an authorized administrator of Research Library. For more information, please contact jennifer.heathcote@agric.wa.gov.au, sandra.papenfus@agric.wa.gov.au, paul.orange@dpird.wa.gov.au.
THE GLORIOUS GLADIOLUS
Some Hints for Home Gardeners
By F. JACKSON

POSSESSING a wide colour range and striking beauty of form, the gladiolus is one of our most popular and most spectacular annuals. When grown in large numbers, the mass formations of varied hues make beds of gladioli a sight to be remembered, but the flower is probably displayed at its best when used as a home decoration.

At its prime, its regal height and variety of tonings make a delightful picture, and even when the lower florets have faded, the spikes may be progressively shortened over lengthy periods until only the tips are left for use in flat bowls.

“Glads” are not hard to grow, and successive plantings may be coaxed to flower over a large part of the year although the best results are obtained from corms planted from June to September.

PURCHASING CORMS
Buy your corms from reputable growers and make sure that they are from disease-free stock. Once introduced, diseases are difficult to eradicate, so it pays to put the emphasis on prevention rather than cure.

The most desirable size for corms is a subject that is often debated but I suggest that they should be from 1½in. to 2¼in. in diameter and of good depth.

PLANTING
Best results are obtained when gladioli are planted in positions which receive full sunlight for most of the day. The soil should be well-drained and the plants prefer slightly acid to neutral conditions, so lime should be used sparingly. Green manuring crops such as peas, lupins, barley and even weed growth, dug into the ground five or six weeks prior to planting the corms will provide useful humus.

Place the corms in positions where they will be free from competition with trees and shrubs, and make sure that the ground is dug deeply.

Corms are ready to plant when root growth, resembling small blisters, appears at the bases of the corms.

It is suggested that the trench in which corms are to be planted should be dug five inches deeper than the actual planting depth which should be 5in. for light soils and 3½-4in. for heavy soils. In the bottom of each yard of trench, sprinkle and work in about a 2oz. tobacco tinful of a mixture made from—

3 measures of blood and bone.
2 measures of superphosphate.
1 measure of sulphate of potash.

A trench 10in. wide will take a double row of corms. After filling in the trench to planting depth, place the corms in staggered rows with 9in. between corms. Cover corms with unmanured soil, then fill in the trench and water thoroughly. Do not have less than 2ft. between trenches as the space permits after-planting cultivation.
WATERING AND CULTIVATION

Under normal rainfall conditions in and around the metropolitan area, satisfactory blooms may be obtained with little or no additional water, but every care should be exercised to ensure that the soil does not dry out.

Regular shallow cultivation to keep down weed growth is necessary and when the plant has reached the four-leaf stage, applications of the fertiliser mixture detailed earlier in this article may be made at intervals of two or three weeks.

Fowl manure, with the addition of a handful of sulphate of potash to each eight feet of trench space will provide a useful alternative and will improve the flower spikes if well watered in.

STAKING

If staking is found to be necessary, use stakes about 6ft. long and 3\text{in.} square. When the spike is showing, plant the stake about 1\text{in.} from the base of the plant. Electric light flex makes excellent tying material. It should be passed loosely around the spike below the bottom florets, and secured by a twist or two. Avoid tying tightly. Raffia or soft string may be used if flex is not available.

Extra ties may be necessary with some varieties, but do not tie the top of the spike.

CUTTING BLOOMS

Spikes of most gladiolus varieties will open well in water if cut when one or two florets have opened.

DARK DAVID: This is a hybrid evolved by the late Mr. E. T. Morgan, formerly Officer-in-Charge of the Vegetable Branch of this Department. The illustration is from an American catalogue in which the compiler says:

"It is pretty hard to imagine that anyone on the very opposite side of the planet from us is doing some very significant breeding of our favourite flower! But Mr. E. T. Morgan in far-off Western Australia has made the hybridising of glads his hobby and has launched his career as a plant breeder with the finest black-red gladiolus I have ever seen. Indeed I'll say that Dark David (named after a race-horse) is head and shoulders above any other maroon gladiolus that I know of."
An attractive display of white gladioli, described by one connoisseur as "Immaculately chaste, impeccably tailored, lavishly ruffled and as lustrous as white velvet."

When cutting use a sharp knife and make an oblique cut which allows the spike to take up water more satisfactorily than when cut straight across. Where a straight cut is used there is always the possibility that the bottom of the spike will sit flat on the base of the vase or bowl and thus stop adequate supplies of water from being absorbed.

Care should be taken to leave as much foliage as possible on the plant when cutting blooms.

**LIFTING AND STORING**

Lifting of corms should be done five or six weeks after flowering or at the first sign of any browning-off of the foliage. Cut away the top about 3in. or 4in. from the top of the corm and dry as quickly as possible under cover, not out in the hot sun. Drying usually takes about three weeks.

When drying is completed remove the remaining piece of stem, clean off the old corm, remove cormlets, dust with DDT powder and then store in as cool a place as possible.

Shallow trays or boxes that will permit free circulation of air are the most suitable receptacles for storing corms. Do not store in tins.

A few naphthalene flakes sprinkled among the corms will act as a deterrent to insects. If the corms are infested with mealy bug, paint the infested parts
with methylated spirit before storing. During the storing period keep a close watch on the corms for the appearance of any disease.

VARIETIES

There are thousands of varieties of gladioli, with new ones making their appearance every season, so the enthusiast has an unlimited field for selection.

From snowy, lustrous whites to deep purples and maroons that verge upon black, there is a vast colour range that includes lemon and orange, lavender, gold, salmon-pink, vivid reds and thousands of fascinating combinations of delicate tonings and striking contrasts.

Each grower has his favourites and the flower that arouses one person’s enthusiasm may fail to find especial favour with his neighbour.

However, for those needing guidance in the selection of a suitable collection I would suggest trying the varieties listed below. They will give a colourful showing and should not be difficult to grow under local conditions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variety</th>
<th>Colour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethel Cave Cole</td>
<td>Pink</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Charm</td>
<td>Red</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth the Queen</td>
<td>Lavender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Both’s Memory</td>
<td>Lemon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picardy</td>
<td>Lemon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Mark’s Memory</td>
<td>Purple Red</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Glory</td>
<td>Tangerine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corona</td>
<td>Cream and Wine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golden Beauty</td>
<td>Yellow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kittyhawk</td>
<td>Lavender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amalfi</td>
<td>Orange Pink</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spotlight</td>
<td>Yellow Red Blotch</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please mention the "Journal of Agriculture, W.A." when writing to advertisers.