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978-1-108-07463-6 - The Green-House Companion: Comprising a General Course of Green-House and Conservatory Practice Throughout the Year

John Claudius Loudon

Frontmatter

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The Green-House Companion

The Scottish landscape gardener and prolific horticultural writer John Claudius Loudon (1783–1843) published this manual on the practice of greenhouse or conservatory gardening in 1824. In his preface he remarks on the rise of greenhouses, which have 'now become an appendage to every villa, and to many town residences'. The work is directed at professional gardeners (and their employers) who may not have the requisite knowledge and skills to make the best use of this exciting new space. The first part of the work describes the practicalities of siting and constructing the greenhouse, how it should be heated, with what plants it should be stocked and how these should be cultivated. The second part consists of a catalogue of 'all the green-house and frame plants hitherto in cultivation'. Still valuable, this substantial guide offers modern readers a record of the plants that were then available to the enthusiast.

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THE
GREEN-HOUSE COMPANION;

COMPRISING

A GENERAL COURSE OF

GREEN-HOUSE AND CONSERVATORY PRACTICE

THROUGHOUT THE YEAR;

A NATURAL ARRANGEMENT OF ALL THE GREEN-
HOUSE PLANTS IN CULTIVATION;

WITH

A DESCRIPTIVE CATALOGUE OF THE MOST DESIRABLE TO FORM A
COLLECTION, THEIR PROPER SOILS, MODES OF PROPAGATION,
MANAGEMENT, AND REFERENCES TO BOTANICAL WORKS
IN WHICH THEY ARE FIGURED.

ALSO,

THE PROPER TREATMENT OF FLOWERS IN ROOMS,
AND BULBS IN WATER GLASSES.

LONDON:

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PREFACE.



A GREEN-HOUSE, which fifty years ago was a luxury not often to be met with, is now become an appendage to every villa, and to many town residences;—not indeed one of the first necessity, but one which is felt to be appropriate and highly desirable, and which mankind recognise as a mark of elegant and refined enjoyment.

The taste for these exotic gardens, indeed, has increased much more rapidly than the skill requisite to manage them to the best advantage,—for the progress of imitation is more rapid than that of knowledge; and hence it is much more common to see a green-house, than to see one filled with a proper selection of plants in high health and beauty.

The management of plants in a green-house requires a higher degree of knowledge, than is called for in the management of the open garden; and though this knowledge is fast extending among the rising generation of gardeners, it is not yet in such abundance as to be general.

The object of the GREEN-HOUSE COMPANION is to supply what is wanting in this respect, not

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only to gardeners, but to their employers. In composing it we have had in view the twofold object of informing such gardeners as may not have attended much to this branch of their profession; and of enlightening their employers so as they may not only be aware when their servant neglects his duty, or performs it properly or improperly; but may, in the case of employing common labourers in their gardens, be able to direct all the operations themselves. The directions we have given, and the reasons for them, are so ample, and so plain, that no lady or gentleman can be at a loss fully to comprehend them, or discern when they are properly acted on.

Though we have chiefly had in view, in preparing these directions, the villa and town greenhouse; yet we have treated the subject of management so amply, and given so complete a catalogue of green-house plants, with all that it can be desirable to know as to their culture and management, that we have no hesitation in presenting our work as a treatise on green-house culture and management as complete as the present state of things admits of. We have composed it in conformity to the best written authorities, and according to what we have seen in our extensive observation and communications with botanical cultivators and nursery-men, in the neighbour-

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hood of London and elsewhere. The work has also had the advantage of revisal by a nurseryman who is extensively engaged in the culture of green-house and hot-house plants at his commercial establishment in the King's Road. This gentleman's chief business is with exotics, and he supplies and manages town green-houses, and executes London contracts for plants in pots, to a considerable extent: he is therefore peculiarly fitted for the task he so obligingly undertook at the request of the publisher. To mention his name he considers would look like a partial advertisement.

There is one advantage which this work possesses over every other of the kind, which, as it may not strike at first sight, we shall here point out. It is the arrangement of all the green-house plants of this country under the natural orders of the system of Jussieu. In our Introduction to that part of the work which contains this arrangement (see PART II. page 1.) the benefits derivable from it are detailed, and we are here desirous of directing the reader's particular attention to the importance of grouping plants on the green-house stage or open garden platform, according to their natural affinities. Let us not be thought dogmatic in advising every master to insist on his gardener's adopting it as far as circumstances will allow. Whoever understands a

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little of the natural system will find few difficulties;—but the prejudices of those who do not, will start thousands of obstacles.—Still let the master insist on trying the plan; a thousand difficulties are often as easily overcome as they are created,—they lie chiefly in the mind,—and those minds which are prejudiced must be brought over by a counter-prejudice, if they are very ignorant; or by reasoning, if they are a little enlightened. The idea of natural arrangements is too new to be generally approved of; but it will soon become as familiar to the British gardener as the Linnæan system. Sweet’s “Catalogue” has marked out the road, which will be formed and completed by Dr. Hooker’s “System” and Loudon’s “Encyclopædia” of Plants. These works will establish and confirm our humble efforts: in the meantime we recommend the master to call in his gardener and point out to him Part I. chap. II. sect. 6, and the Introduction to Part II.—let him thoroughly ponder what is there said, and afterwards they may come out to the green-house, where they will find us ready to show them how the thing may actually be done.

London, June 24, 1824.

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ABBREVIATIONS.

- A. H. Andrews's Heaths.
- A. R. Andrews's Botanist's Repository.
- B. C. Loddige's Botanical Cabinet.
- B. M. Botanical Magazine.
- B. R. Botanical Register.
- S. G. Sweet's Geraniaceæ.