

Horticulture

BATES, H. E. *A Lover of Flowers*.
160pp. Michael Joseph. £2.

Beautifully illustrated by Pauline Ellison and attractively produced, the book gives sound advice as well as aesthetic pleasure and helpful practical information about unusual exotic plants and common ones. Mr Bates realized the therapeutic value of his garden as he recovered from a serious illness and he shares with the reader the pleasures of nearly forty years of gardening in Kent. His garden is planned to reach its zenith in late summer and autumn, but he begins with the early year and reveals his appreciation of form and colour, emphasizing especially his pleasure in greens, whether of foliage or the more subtle shades of green flowers. Recommended plants for borders do not need stakes, have a long flowering period, incontestable grace of form and tolerance of variable weather. Even so, there is obviously no slide-rule to success, no "great milky way" to perfection, and many plants will prove "uncertain, coy and hard to please". The author presents his own triumphs and failures with the enthusiasm of a dedicated gardener, often encouraging "one more try". He has his prejudices and favourites, auriculas, salvias, tulips, fuchsias and viburnums among the latter, and the book also gives helpful information on the use of the greenhouse and of pruning, together with delightful musings on gardeners both amateur and professional.