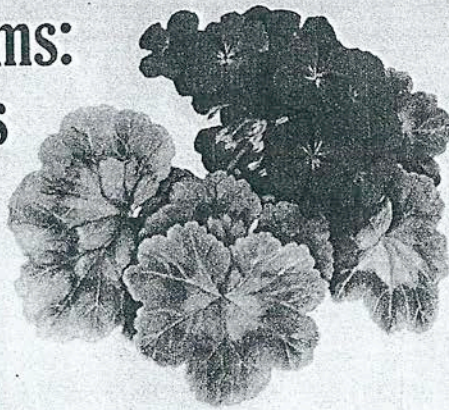


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Geraniums: Tricolors and others



C. WEN SIMPSON

by H.E. Bates

For some years now I have excluded all bedding geraniums from my scheme of things. It isn't that I completely dislike such varieties as Paul Crampel, Lady Ilchester, Queen of Denmark, Gustav Emrich and Winston Churchill, it is simply that when faced with the worst an English summer can offer they just give no reward.

All this is not to say that I have no geraniums at all. I do indeed, but at the same time confine myself only to varieties with fascinating variegated leaves.

The range in these markings and variegations is pretty wide, starting with the golden and silver tricolors on the one hand and going on to the black-leaved varieties such as Mephistopheles and Black Vesuvius on the other. These black-leaved varieties are mostly miniatures, not growing more than eight inches or so high, and are therefore, in my opinion, not as suitable for growing outdoors.

I think my favourites among these variegations are the butterfly-leaved varieties. These have a butterfly mark of distinct contrasting tone in the centre of the leaf, the outer edges of which can be in delicious lime or apple-green. There are not a great many of these butterflies, but some of the best known are Happy Thought, Crystal Palace Gem, Freak of Nature and Black Cox. Very often a plant will produce not one or two variations in its leaf markings but several.

Though the tricolors, both silver and gold, are so called they are more often than not quadricolors, holding infinite variations of gold, red, green and purple-brown. It is not uncommon to find among them a plant of which no two leaves are alike. In the silver-leaved and silver tricolors Lass O'Gowrie and Miss Burdett Coutts are two remarkable survivors, often confused, dating from well over a hundred years ago. Not quite so old but certainly dating from Victorian times and certainly as well loved are Caroline Schmidt, Miss Parker, Chelsea Gem and Flower of Spring.

Here I must put in an enthusiastic word for a geranium which, though not belonging to the tricolors or variegations, is nevertheless an admirable plant—Ville de Paris.

You see this ivy-leaved variety all over France and Switzerland. It is so easily propagated that in three years I have worked up a stock of several hundreds from the half dozen original sprigs I first brought back from France.

Lastly, a variegated ivy which is entirely new to me but quite enchanting is Sussex Lace, which admirably describes its delicious green-and-gold lace-work. You may be sure I shall have my propagating needles working hard at this one.

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