

CHAPTER X.

VINES FOR EVERGLADE PLANTING.



IN THE development of a home in a tropical country there is no group of plants which give as much gratification as do the vines. They grow quickly, they afford shade in a short time, they occupy but small space, in fact space which would otherwise not be utilized, and in addition many vines yield products which are quite equal in value to other crops of forest and field.

They are in a peculiar way attractive, and to many people far more attractive than bushes and trees.

They gracefully cover unsightly places and clamber into nooks and corners, covering with a rich green fences and out-buildings and at times are a delight beyond expression when in the acme of their bloom. A poultry wire fence covered with vine is usually a more effective screen than a solid board fence and although the effect of complete seclusion is secured the air can filter through.

In the old world, where space is scarce, even fruit trees, such as figs, peaches, apples, lemons, etc., are grown on trellises. In this case the fruit is larger, brighter in color and of better flavor because of the abundance of light and free circulation of air which this form of culture provides. I have just received a postcard from a friend summering on the Austrian side of the Lake of Garda, showing lemons growing on trellises. The writer says: "I am sending this to you because I doubt if anywhere except here on the Lake of Garda lemons are trained against walls between pillars in this way. There is a lattice overhead and I suppose they can cover them in winter if necessary."

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Suppose one owns only a small lot and builds in such a way that he has a central court or patio and suppose over this patio he builds a lattice and on this lattice he trains grapefruit or lime or orange, he would have an attraction that would afford himself and his family comfort, but above all it would be a sight which would hold a Northern visitor spellbound.

I know a man who owns a little one-story wooden house, covered with paper for a roof. This was hot in summer and he could not afford tiles or shingles. He built over it one foot or more from the roof a light lattice frame. He planted a quick-growing vine and now his house is actually roofed with a mantle of green. It acts like the double roofs so common in the Southwest. Between his house and the sun there is not only this roof of green but a current of air. It furnishes a nesting place for the birds and cuts out the bare, cheap look of a paper roof.

It would be impossible in so short a space to treat of all the vines which grow in South Florida, because they are legion, but some, in addition to being beautiful in leafage and flower, bear fruits of more or less value.

Probably few visitors to Florida realize that the vanilla vine is native, that it grows wild in our hammocks. It is slightly different from the vanilla of Mexico and South America and is almost leafless. It hangs pendant from branches like long slender green snakes. It was for a long time considered by botanists of the same species as the Mexican. In Small's Botany of the Southeastern United States it is called *Vanilla planifolia*. "In forests, peninsular Florida and tropical America, also widely cultivated." It is an orchid and might some day be profitably grown for the aromatic pods it yields.

The yam is a quick growing vine. Yams form one of the staple foods of many tropical peoples, especially in the East. The yam vine forms a root similar to a sweet potato but many times as large. I have seen a party of ten at dinner served with one-half a yam. There are many kinds of yams. They grow like mad in rich mucky soil and in addition to the shade afforded yield a food almost equal to a white potato.

THE EVERGLADES

That strange fruit called the ceriman is really a vine. In its native state it grows high into the trees. It has big leaves with natural holes in them and produces a flower something like a big calla lily and a fruit the shape of an ear of corn. Its scientific name is *Monstera deliciosa*.

The passion vine is too well known to need description. It yields a fruit called the granadilla in tropical America.

The black pepper of commerce is a vine. Also rattan is a climbing palm and who knows but that both of these may grow in South Florida?

Some time ago over in the Bahamas I saw a man planting vines in the hammock for rubber. Several vines yield rubber of commercial importance. We have one native rubber vine, *Rhabdadenia biflora* (same as *Echites paludosa*), and the one which has been planted in the West Indies for rubber is *Cryptostegio grandiflora*.

Pereskia aculeata, the lemon vine—the Barbadoes' gooseberry—has already grown to be a favorite in South Florida. It belongs to the cactus family and produces an edible fruit.

Think of the gourds which yield such useful utensils. The chayote, a vegetable vine from Mexico, has fruited in Florida, but has never become popular.

Then there is the grape, some variety of which will no doubt do well here. One good scuppernong will cover an arbor a quarter of an acre in extent in the course of time. The Key grape is already common and wild grapes are abundant.

There are many morning glory vines in Florida. They are usually treated as weeds. One of our morning glory vines yields jalap, a famous medicine. Many are highly ornamental and furnish in addition honey for bees when other bee food is scarce.

The velvet bean and other vines of the family grow very rapidly and yield an abundance of beans and fodder.

We have one little vine—very delicate—holding tight to stone walls, soon covering the stone completely with a growth of dark green. It is *Ficus repens*. I heard a man once say that he wanted a stone house just to be able to have this vine

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on it. Strange to say it is a *Ficus*, the same genus to which the fig, the common rubber trees and the great banyans of India belong.

And then there is a host of highly ornamental vines that one must learn to know before appreciation is possible—such as the night-blooming cereus, bignonias, christmas vine, jasmines, solanums, chalice flower, clematis, woodbine, Virginia creeper, roses, allamanda, antigonon, bougainvillea, tacomas, etc., etc., all of which enliven the landscape and render the barest weather-beaten, tumble-down shack a thing of beauty and a joy forever.



IN THE MIDST OF THE HAMMOCK ON KEY LARGO. IT IS IN THIS REGION THAT THE LARGEST MAHOGANY OF THE KEYS IS LOCATED. KEY LARGO IS THE LARGEST AND HIGHEST OF THE KEYS. THE PHOTO SHOWS THE LINE OF THE NEW RAILROAD TO KEY WEST. (PHOTO BY FLORIDA PHOTOGRAPHIC CONCERN, FORT PIERCE, FLA.)