

CHAPTER XIII.—YEW AND OTHER HEDGES.

*Yew Hedges in Ancient Gardens—In Modern Use—Other Trees for Hedges—Box—Holly—Privet—Laurel—Beech—Hornbeam—Thorough Planting—Topiary Work.*

WHEN the great English houses were built that no longer needed to be fortresses; when their windows might safely look abroad into the open country instead of giving on to an inner court; then also the pleasure garden, which had hitherto been necessarily restricted, was greatly enlarged and its many possibilities were developed. Whether it was that the tradition of the old need of walled protection was still in every man's mind, or whether the wonderful sense of fitness that characterised the work of our Tudor and Jacobean ancestors was the impelling agency we know not, but it is clear that they at once adopted the system of surrounding and subdividing their gardens with hedges of living greenery. They rightly chose the



FIG. 168.—LAWN ENCLOSED BY ANCIENT TRIMMED YEWS.



FIG. 169.—CLEEVE PRIOR : THE TWELVE APOSTLES.

English yew as the tree that should conform to their will as green walls and ornaments in their gardens of formal design. Some actual examples remain, while traces of the use of green yew, clipped and regulated, as important portions of the garden plan, are so frequent as to point to its general use. In some cases of remaining examples the original design is distorted or entirely lost, and yet a mysterious and strangely attractive charm remains; while in others some kind of symmetry has been maintained (Fig. 168). There are examples of noble use from old times in gardens of quite moderate size. The ancient yews at Cleeve Prior (Fig. 169), known as the Twelve Apostles, stand in six stately pairs flanking the paved walk to a modest manor house. At a little more than halfway of their height each pair stretches out branches to the next, forming a connecting arch, so that a framed garden scene, five times repeated, is visible from right and left. Hedges of yew with turf alone have an



FIG. 170.—AN ANCIENT BOWLING GREEN.

extraordinary quality of repose—of inspiring a sentiment of refreshing contentment. One thinks, with abounding satisfaction of many an ancient bowling green, with its bright, short turf underfoot, its deep green sides of yew, or yew and quiet wall, and nothing more but the sky above and perhaps some masses of encompassing trees (Figs. 170 and 171). Compared with the yew no tree is so patient of coercion, so protective in its close growth, or so effective as a background to the bright bloom of parterre or flower-border (Fig. 172). Its docility to shaping into wall, niche, arch and column is so complete and convenient that it comes first among growing things as a means of expression in that domain of design that lies between architecture and gardening. Our architects and garden designers are well aware of its value. A drawing by Mr. Mallows (Fig. 173) shows, next below a raised terrace, two square garden courts, the terrace steps between them descending to a long green

walk, with flower-borders backed by yew hedges, leading to a circular fountain court paved and brick-walled. The perspective and plan of a garden by Mr. Inigo Triggs (Figs. 174 and 175) show the same need and good use of yew hedges for enclosing and protecting rectangular gardens. At Bulwick (Fig. 176) some old yews are clipped only where their lateral advance threatens the closing of a green path. Yew hedges have much use besides for securing privacy. Fig. 177 shows a young hedge that will be allowed to grow some feet higher to screen the offices and their possibly unsightly adjuncts from the pleasure garden. Such hedges are usually carried up to a height of from six to seven feet. For finishing the top the best-looking and most practical form is that of a very low-pitched roof; this also presents the most easily accessible shape for clipping.



FIG. 171.—A QUIET BOWLING GREEN.

Though yew is undoubtedly the best tree for garden hedges, it is by no means the only one. Where the soil contains lime, or, in fact, in any good loam, the green tree box makes a fine hedge and clips well. But it is slow to grow—slower than yew—and both are costly. Ilex can be trained and clipped into tall hedges; there are fine examples at the remarkably beautiful and successful Italian gardens at Brockenhurst. Green holly is also a fine hedge plant, but wants more width if it is to be carried up any height. For a quicker hedge at less cost there is the Lawson cypress, growing fast and clipping well. The humbler privet we all know; it is quite cheap and soon grows into a neat hedge. We are so well used to seeing it bearing green leaves all the year that we forget that it is really deciduous. When it grows wild as a small twiggy tree it is leafless in winter. It is the trimming that induces



FIG. 172.—YEW HEDGE AS A BACKGROUND TO FLOWERS.