

**GARDENING IN EGYPT: A
HANDBOOK OF
GARDENING FOR LOWER
EGYPT**

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Gardening in Egypt: A Handbook of Gardening for Lower Egypt by Walter Draper

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HANDBOOK OF GARDENING

FOR

LOWER EGYPT.

BY

WALTER DRAPER.

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the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew; and the Crystal
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1895.

DEDICATED

TO

G. B. ALDERSON, ESQ.,

AS A TOKEN OF RESPECT FOR HIS
MANY ACTS OF KINDNESS TO ME DURING MY
STAY IN RAMLEH.

PREFACE.

SO far as I am aware, no book on Egyptian Gardening has yet been published in English. That this little work will fill up the void, I do not for a moment pretend, as the subject is an extensive one, and would require a much larger treatise than the simple handbook I now offer to my readers.

All that I have done is to respond to an invitation to put into a more permanent form the notes that I took for the course of Horticultural lectures, which I delivered last winter in Ramleh.

These notes have been revised and enlarged, and I have added at the end a garden calendar of work for the different months of the year.

I have to thank many of the residents of Alexandria and Ramleh for the kind interest they have shown in my work, and for the practical hints they have given me on Gardening matters.

To Professor Sickenberger, of the School of Medicine, Cairo, I am indebted for information concerning the

number of species of the Date Palm, and specimens of new cactaceous and other plants from Abyssinia; also to my friend, J. F. Duthie, Esq., B.A., F.L.S., Director of the Botanical Department, Northern India, for collections of seeds, many of which have grown well and are new to this country; and to the kindness of Dr. Geo. King, C.I.E., LL.D., F.R.S., F.L.S., Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Calcutta, by whose help I have been able to introduce several varieties of Orchids and Aroids, that were previously not grown in Egypt.

In describing plants I have endeavoured, when possible, to give the Latin, European, or Native names, which will be found in three distinct types, commencing with the former—for example: **Solanum Melongena**—Egg Plant—*Bydingan*.

RAMLEH,

EGYPT.

June, 1895.



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GARDENING IN EGYPT.

CHAPTER I.

CLIMATE AND SOIL.

CLIMATE.

THE close proximity of this country to Europe is often the cause of too little attention being paid to its climatic peculiarities. Egypt is just near enough to the Equator to alter the seasons without entirely changing them, and therefore it is a considerable help to the horticulturist if he makes a careful study of the changes he will have to contend with.

The climate of Egypt is to a great extent influenced by the Nile, but the immense absorbing power of the desert is the country's chief regulator, for, were it not for these large tracts of desert plains, the winter rains of Lower Egypt, would extend far up the Nile Valley, and the great expanse of nearly stagnant water at both mouths of the Nile, would possibly render the fertile Delta, as unhealthy as the pestilent regions of the West Coast of Africa.

The Egyptian year may be divided into two seasons: the hot season from April to November, and the cold season from December to March. February is usually the month for high winds, although occasionally strong winds are experienced even before and after that

month; and it is certain that in Alexandria, Ramleh, and other places on the coast, the salt-laden wind from the Mediterranean is undoubtedly the worst enemy to the gardens.

It will therefore behove the judicious horticulturist with an exposed garden in these localities, to see that young trees and tall plants are securely staked, that tender plants are protected, and that all large fan-leaved palms, such as *Latania borbonica*, *Sabal umbraculifera*, and *Washingtonia filifera*, have their leaves securely tied up. The same rule applies to choice tender plants that have stood out in isolated positions during the summer, like *Crotons* and others, which should be taken in at the beginning or middle of November.

During the next three months the thermometer will sometimes fall to 35deg. Fahr. in Alexandria, and 40deg. Fahr. in Cairo; therefore, when there are glass-houses, all available space should be utilised in storing tender plants from the low temperature experienced outside.

The south winds from the desert, known as "Khamseens," which occur in the spring—usually in March and April—are in some cases detrimental to young plants, but the damage done is not nearly so great as that caused to fruit-blossom and tender shoots by the salt winds from the sea. These winds make the plants appear as if they had been burnt, and often strip entire hedges and trees of their foliage. It will be found, however, that where the wind is uninterrupted in its passage, the injury to plants is not so great as if its course is obstructed.

The climate of Cairo, with reference to plant life, varies considerably from that of Alexandria, insomuch that many plants which thrive in one town will not flower, or only partially exist in the other, and then only under the most favourable circumstances. The following instances of this may be quoted: *Grevillea robusta* (Australian Silky Oak), *Caryota urens* (Toddy Palm), and *Bauhinia purpurea*, which all do well in