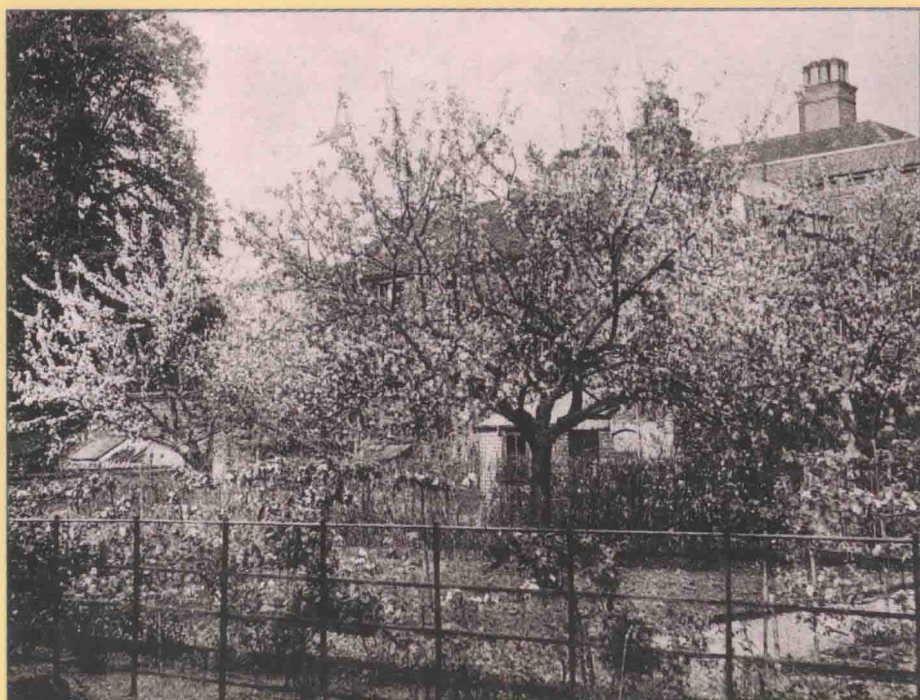


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A  
GARDENER'S  
YEAR

H. RIDER HAGGARD



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# A Gardener's Year

H. RIDER HAGGARD



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A GARDENER'S YEAR

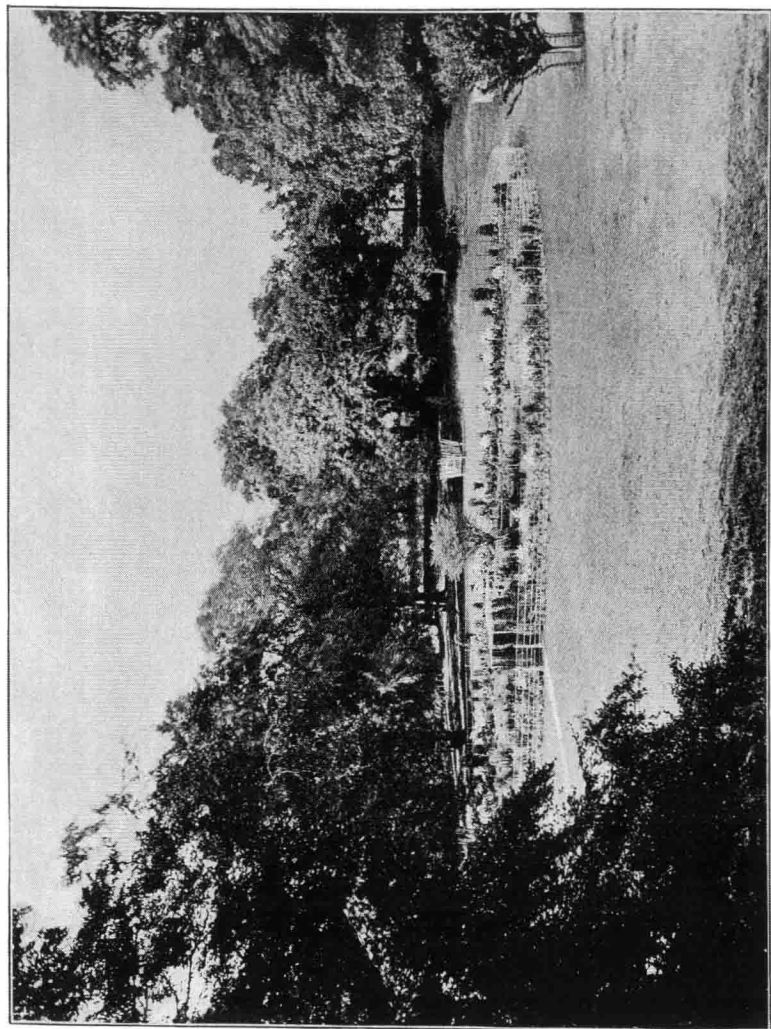
“I list not seeke the common colours of antiquitie; when notwithstanding the world can brag of no more ancient monument than Paradise and the Garden of Eden; and the fruits of the earth may contend for seignoritie, seeing their mother was the first creature that conceived, and they themselves the first fruit she brought forth. Talke of perfect happinesse or pleasure, and what place was so fit for that, as the garden place, where Adam was set to be the Herbarist? Whither did the poets hunt for their syncere delights, but into the gardens of Alcinous, of Adonis and the orchards of Hesperides? Where did they dreame that heaven should be, but in the pleasant garden of Elysium? Whither do all men walke for their honest recreation, but thither where the earth hath most beneficially painted her face with flourishing colours? And what season of the yeere more longed for than the Spring, whose gentle breath inticeth forth the kindly sweetes, and makes them yeeld their fragrant smells?”

GERARDE'S HERBALL,

“*From my house in Holborn, Dec. 1st, 1597.*”

“We wreath our dead with flowers: they are the best which we can offer them, to whom the gold and frankincense and myrrh of this world have no longer any meaning. Flowers, we believe, strew the path they tread; flowers undreamed of droop from the trees that wave above them in the fields which they have won. To our imagining, the heaven we hope for is a land of flowers. At least, we are told that the lost Eden of our race was a garden. Gethsemane also was a garden, and, if he will but read them, to each human soul as he wanders through life's Gethsemane such flowers as blow in it have a message. Should any doubt, let him visit a children's Hospital and see how the sufferers there turn their pale faces to the flowers as the flowers turn their faces to the sun. I remember writing, I know not where, that even in a flower there dwells some shadow of the glory of its Maker. This I believe, and so I say, 'Good luck to those who conjure such shadows to the earth; good luck to the gardener and good luck to his gardening;' for he does something to brighten this grey, ungracious world.”

H. R. H.—*One and All Gardening*, 1899.



FRONT LAWN AND POND GARDEN

# A GARDENER'S YEAR

BY

H. RIDER HAGGARD

*With Plan and twenty-five Illustrations*

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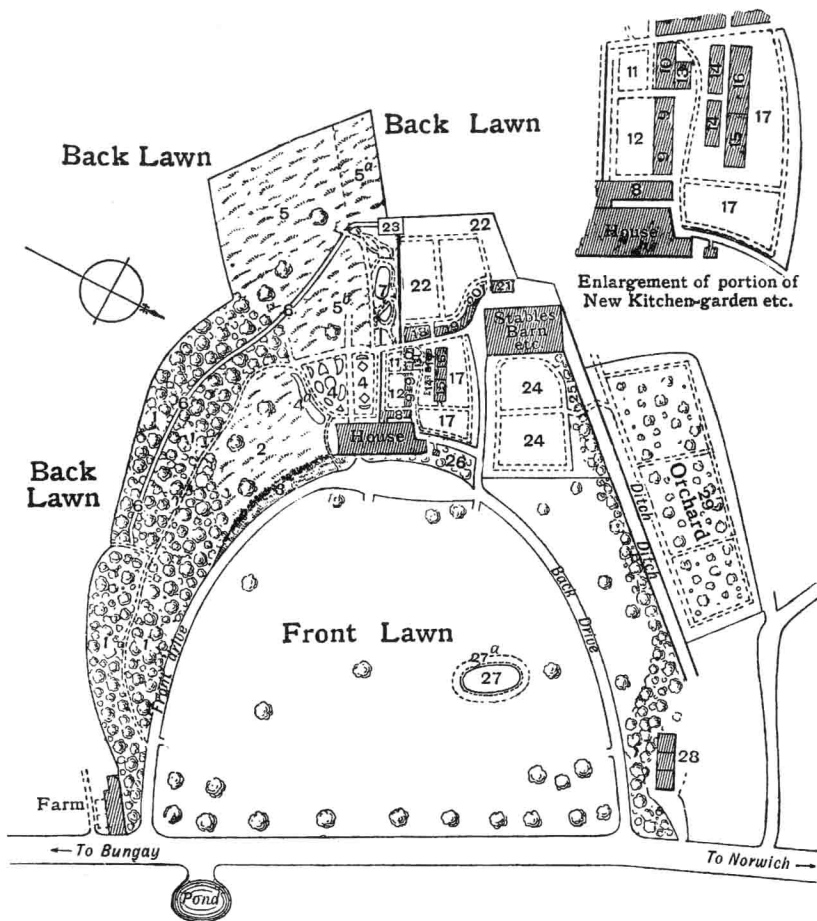
1905

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I DEDICATE  
THESE MODEST BUT, AS I TRUST,  
NOT UNINSTRUCTIVE PAGES  
TO  
MY FRIEND AND FELLOW-GARDENER  
MRS. ROBERT MANN

DITCHINGHAM,  
*16th August 1904*





KEY TO MAP OF GARDEN

- |                                      |  |                              |
|--------------------------------------|--|------------------------------|
| 1 Shrubbery                          | converted into Mushroom-house, &c.                   | 19 Peach-house               |
| 2 Old Lawn                           | 9 Greenhouses  | 20 Fig and Tomato-house      |
| 3 Bank with Yew Fence on top         | 10 Cold Orchid-house                                 | 21 Old Dog-kennel            |
| 4 Flower-garden with ornamental beds | 11 Flower Bed  | 22 Old Kitchen Garden        |
| 4a Open Flower-border                | 12 Old Vinery-border                                 | 23 Pond recently enlarged    |
| 5 Tennis Lawn                        | 13 Boiler and old Mushroom-houses (now Potting-shed) | 24 Stable Garden             |
| 5a New addition                      | 14 Pits  | 25 Rubbish Yard              |
| 5b Grass                             | 15 Warm Orchid-house                                 | 26 Shrubbery with Dog-kennel |
| 6 Sunk Walk                          | 16 Cool Orchid-house                                 | 27 Water Garden              |
| 7 Elm-tree Garden with old Yew Fence | 17 New Kitchen Garden                                | 27a New Pond Border          |
| 8 Old Potting-shed, &c., now         | 18 Intermediate-house                                | 28 Cottages with Shrubbery   |
|                                      |  | 29 Orchard                   |
|                                      |  | ===== Garden Paths           |

# A GARDENER'S YEAR

## THE GARDEN PAST AND PRESENT

MANY a book have I sat down to commence, all of them with a humble heart, but none that I can remember in quite such earnest fear and trembling as this gardener's diary for the year 1903. For more seasons than I care to count I have been a gardener in sundry lands, following that most ancient craft with a single mind, and not, I hope, without learning some of its mysteries. And yet how much remains to learn, more than ever can be learned by me. My case is not singular, however, and herein lies consolation; at least never yet have I met the man or woman who knew *everything* about gardening, least of all among those who follow it by profession.

These for the most part are good flower-men, or good vegetable-men, or they understand Grapes, or can grow Violets—but fail with Roses and other things. Or perchance, but this is rare, though many there be who swear it, Orchids are their *forte*. (Here I may say at once, speaking as a modest amateur of these last-named lovely plants, rather would I hire a man who had never seen one of them. Of course there are many exceptions, still every grower should pray to be delivered from the new "head" who "understands Orchids." Better far take a novice who is willing to learn, and train him.)

To sum up, the individual, employer or servant, who is really master of *all* branches of English gardening has

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Still, such as it is, I cannot begin better than by describing it. Some of it is ancient, over a hundred years old, perhaps much more, and it stands high. The soil is a stiff loam upon blue clay. Once when I dug out the bed of the Peach house, I had to remove a quantity of this primeval blue clay, and was surprised at its tenacity and closeness. Pickaxes were needed to get it out, and a tiny square would break up into enough to fill a cart. Yet even in this hard, unpromising material there must be virtue. I know it thus.

With the excavated clay I made a bank about four feet high by six feet or so through at the base. On this bank (after a frost had crumbled it) I planted a Yew fence, perhaps a dozen years ago. To-day it is not by any means all that such a fence should be; but, putting aside the dryness which browns the covering turf and must afflict the roots in summer, for this there are two reasons. Until last year I never clipped it, therefore it is loose in habit; and secondly, for a great part of its length it stands under the shadow of that most beautiful but most poisonous of trees, the Beech. Where they are clear of this upas shade, that is near by the house to which they run, the Yews have, however, done very well. This, I think, shows that there is nutriment to be found even in blue clay, which, I suppose, has not felt the sweet influences of sun and rain for hundreds, or, perhaps, thousands of years.

When first I knew this garden—the summer sun and winter's wild, wet face have looked on it some four-and-twenty times since then—it was small, and, with a lad to help him, managed by one man, now retired to a

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cottage at the gate. Poor lad! he went for a soldier, and, returning at the expiration of his service, took to herring fishing, and was drowned off Lowestoft. To the south-east lay the old tennis lawn, as it does to-day, somewhat hollow in shape ("dishing" is the local term), perhaps because brick earth may have been dug from it when the house was built in generations gone. This is backed by a strip of plantation that screens it from the House farm, and on it stand a copper and two fine green Beeches, one of the latter invariably the earliest tree to burst its buds in all this place. Here, till I drained it, the water stood in pools.

To the south was, and still is, the Flower garden, through which run one wide, central gravel walk and two others. In the turf spaces thus inclosed are round, lozenge, and crescent-shaped beds. In those old days there were edgings of evergreens on either side, but they are gone now, that on the left looking south having become an open border, and that to the right a Rose bed, between which and the ancient, leaning, red-brick wall runs one of the paths. Not far from the foot of this bed, by the round, arched doorway that leads to the other parts of the garden, over which white Clematis trails like snow in summer, stand seven ancient Elms. Very beautiful they are, bare or leafed, but sometimes they shed their great limbs without warning, as is the fashion of this dangerous tree.

Beyond this again was, and still is, the Back lawn, stretching to the top of the steep slope above the river Waveney, but now, on the further side of a sunk path of which no one knows the origin (it may have been part of a moat, or perhaps it was but a humble ditch), a double tennis court has been stolen from this field and inclosed with railings. Here, when they have nothing else to do, the red-poll'd cattle love to stand chewing the cud, either because they take an interest in croquet or tennis, or, more probably, in expectation of the sweet