

# For the gardener

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# For the Gardener

## CARNATION (*Dianthus*)

The subject of carnations is very extensive and could not possibly be contained to the full in a short article. This being the case the writer is confining himself to the border carnation.

Historically, this type of carnation is of the old type and is thought to have been introduced into the United Kingdom by William the Conqueror. We know for fact that it flourished in the time of Shakespeare. The development of this plant is lost in the mists of time though traceable to 300 BC when Ancient Greeks used it extensively in their gardens. Before the days of synthetic scents it is known that natural scents were made from this plant, particularly popular among Mohammedans. Also one of the earlier French Kings used it for medicinal purposes. The word *Dianthus* derives from *dios*, god, and *Athos*, flower, which loosely translates to 'Divine Flower'. This would appear to show that it was a real favourite in very early times.

The border carnation seems to be able to adapt itself to almost any conditions and climates, there are strictly two types, the one grown outside in the open garden with a comparatively short flowering period and the other is the perpetual flowering type, which, whilst in favoured areas can be grown outside, is usually given special treatment in the greenhouse and induced to produce flowers throughout the year. The second type mentioned is a subject on its own, therefore the following refers to the first type.

The first type mentioned is akin to the old variety and is quite easy to cultivate. It can be grown from seed, but as many plants so produced only have single flowers it is better to produce fresh supplies by cuttings or layering.

If produced by seed, sowing should be made in boxes filled with a good compost with a layer of peat at the bottom to conserve moisture. It is well to add a little lime to the soil as these plants are lime loving. The seed should be thinly sprinkled on the top of the soil and then

lightly covered by sifted soil. The seedlings should be pricked out as soon as large enough to handle and placed in a cold frame or cool greenhouse or even a prepared nursery bed. Grow on and when suitably developed move to flowering position. Sowing in February or March could produce plants which might possibly flower the same year, later sowings will ensure good, sturdy plants which will stand through winter and bloom the following year.

If propagating by layering, clear a space around the parent plant of about six inches and cover this space with about three inches of good rich soil. Choose good healthy shoots on the main plant and strip off lower leaves, cut a sloping notch two-thirds through the stem of the shoot and press this into the soil around the plant making sure that the notch is under the soil. This should be firmly

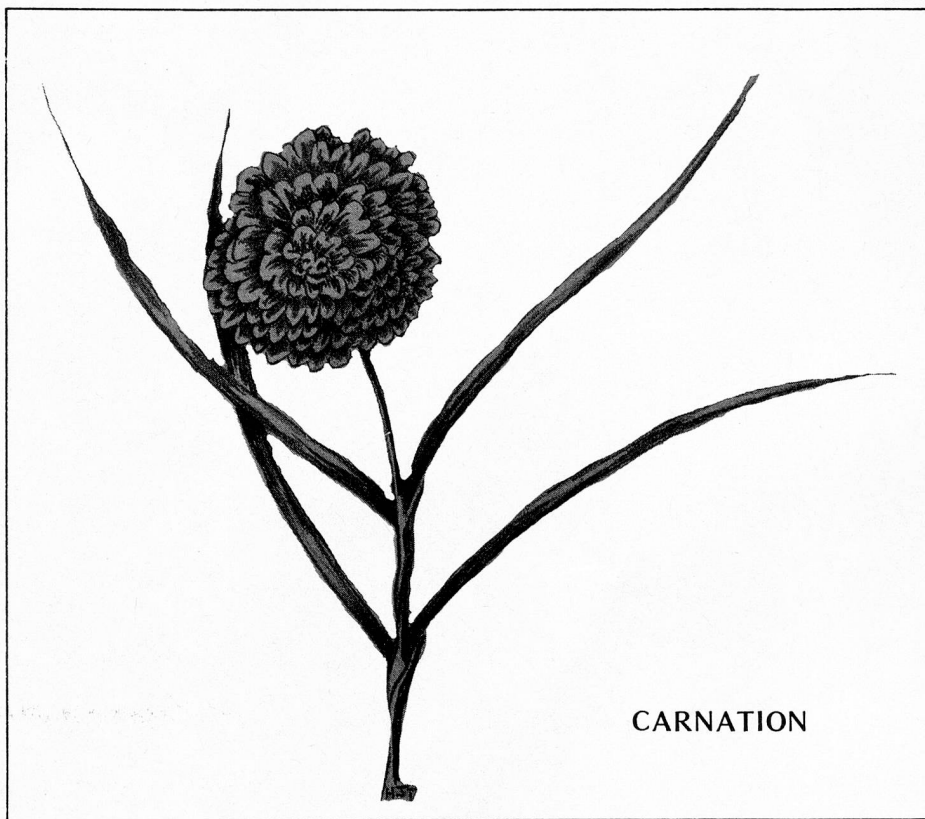
pegged into position, and well watered. In three to four weeks roots will have formed around the notch and the stem can be cut away from the parent plant, leave the layered stem in the same position for about six weeks more then lift and transplant into permanent position. Thus those layered in July can be moved in September. The parent plants are worthless and should be destroyed after having served their purpose.

## CUTTINGS

Cuttings are quite easy to grow on. Pull off a shoot from a fully grown plant at a joint, strip off lower leaves, dip in hormone rooting powder then plant in pots containing a good, rich, sandy soil with some lime added, place pots into cold frame or even in a sheltered position in the garden. Leave for some weeks and rooting will take place quite easily.

Don't forget carnations are lime lovers and with the addition also of a little wood ash and bonemeal really good vigorous plants can be obtained.

HJT



CARNATION



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**A Member of the Constantine Group**



*The badger is a nocturnal creature so great patience and skill must have been needed to obtain this photograph. This creature also deserves our recognition in the context of overall respect for our ecology.*