

## Chapter One

### YES, GLADS!

The word glads is well recognized as a synonym for the proper name Gladiolus use in the book title "Glorious Gladiolus". The intent is to create a picture of extreme beauty in ones mind. The term Glads itself implies a joyous happy condition. Most gladiolus growers commonly use the term glad in singular form, such as a glad corm, glad society and glad show and when talking about several or many gladiolus simply add the letter "s" to glad to create the plural form glads. In this book, if you find the words glad, glads or gladiolus you may be sure we are referring to the glorious gladiolus plant and flower.

Many gladiolus growers are so involved in their interest that they talk, think and dream about the glories of the gladiolus. Elmer Gove, a revered gladiolus grower used the term glad nut to express his infatuation with glads. Some with this infatuation consider that they have been bitten by the glad bug. As with other beautiful flowers, the gladiolus has its staunch followers. Let's examine the merits of glads.

Possibly most people first encounter glads in the flower form. The range of colors and flower forms is broad. Virtually all possible colors, except deep green and true blue, are found in the glad portfolio. Within each color there are ranges in shade, markings and blends. Think of a color or color combination and with few exceptions, it can be found. The Size of bloom ranges from the tiniest at one inch, up to seven or eight inches in diameter of the floret. Color and size classification of glads will be explained in Chapter nine. Floret shapes of round, triangular, needle-pointed, square, rectangular, hooded, lacinated, ruffled, knuckled or dimpled, plain petaled and recurved can all be found in the gladiolus family.

Gladiolus gets their name from the sword of the gladiator, which the leaf and the unopened spike of the glad plant resemble in shape. The glad plant is upright in growth. Heights of seven to eight feet in exceptional cases may occur. The normal height of glads, in the bloom stage, is four to five feet. Some miniature glads may only reach heights of one and a half to two and a half feet. The first few florets at the bottom of the spike will show color for a few days and then will open into fully opened florets. Opening of additional buds will continue up the spike, with as many as fourteen, possibly more, florets finally being open at once. The flower spike may contain up to thirty buds, with a normal number being between eighteen and twenty-four buds. The remainder of the buds will continue to open as the earlier opening florets wilt, fade and are removed. A spike may be used as a cut flower or a garden ornamentation for up to fourteen days if properly cared for.

Gladiolus are a valuable component of the floral trade. The fact that glads lend themselves to the preparation of large baskets, vases, patinas and corsages, along with arrangements for the home and office, has made created a year round demand for gladiolus. They meet florists' needs for all occasions, from weddings to funerals, being supplied from local and around the world growers. Whether locally grown in season or shipped long distances, glads are used extensively. Glads from Europe, Africa, and North, South and Central America, vie to fill a year round market! Fathered by demand, a large wholesale industry exists to supply glad corms and flowers. The transportation industry has also benefited by shipping quantities of blooms by land, air, and corms by sea. With the advent of high speed refrigerated shipping, the florist's year round demand for gladiolus is met.

Use of glads as home decorations provides a steady demand for cut flower glads at roadside stands and farmers' markets. The beautiful spikes lend themselves to displays in tall container as well as in low arrangement, using oasis, as a support.

Glads are relatively easy to grow, but success in growing glads will improve with experience. Details of successful growing procedures and care will be covered in Chapters four, five and six. As with beginning many new endeavors your venture, whether as a hobbyist or a commercial grower, is best started on a small scale and then progressing in the size of your operation as experience shows probable success. This flexibility in scale of operation allows one person or a family to grow glads to meet many needs. Decorating the home, having a beautiful flower garden, supplying flowers to churches, friends, convalescents and sales to the public at markets, floral shops and even to flower wholesalers, will provide appropriate rewards.

The floral characteristics of glads favor the staging of beautiful exhibitions. In areas where glads are grown, especially in the Australia, Canada, England, Europe, New Zealand and the United States, the existence of flower shows featuring glads will be found. Interest in glads is developing in India with glads as a crop. Since glads are native, in the species form, in Asia and Africa it would be expected that interest will develop there in the future.

The excitement of showing that you can grow the perfect spike motivates glad enthusiasts to travel great distances to compete for top honors across the country at sanctioned Gladiolus shows. These shows are also popular with those who see them. Viewing these expertly staged shows, which often feature new cultivars and hear-to-fore unknown colors and form of glads are a magnet to potential new growers. Interaction between the growers and spectators can lead to perpetuating the glad bug.

County, Province and State fairs, and Garden Club Shows generally feature exhibits of gladiolus. These flower shows are a great factor in motivating the individual having a garden interest, to become a glad grower. Compared to staged glad shows, they may vary in quality, but are a great encouragement for the individual having a gardening interest. With attention to the principles of good plant husbandry and selection of suitable modern cultivars (varieties) most can learn to grow and enjoy this lovely flower.

Producing new gladiolus from seed can lead to another fascinating activity, which is cross breeding glads or most commonly referred to as hybridizing. The latter term is a questionable usage, but still widely used and will be used to identify those who grow gladiolus from seed which have been produced by hand pollination, or cross breeding. Even open pollinated seeds, those produced by self pollination or natural cross pollination by insects or wind, give useful and interesting variations of gladiolus characteristics. I would estimate that there may be as many as 200 people or more around the world, who are now engaged in growing glads from seeds. They are producing new strains and cultivars by this method. New glad cultivars arise also by mutations (sports.) The sports arise from structural changes in the genetic make up of the glads, such as changes in the chromosome structure. Mutations to produce sports of glads are relatively rare and may occur in two ways, such as to produce a new strain or to back form similar to a parent. A few very important glad cultivars have arisen as mutations.

The benefits of gardening as healthy exercise are now well known. The planting of a dozen or more glad corms in the home garden will not produce a significant level of exercise, however when planted to improve your enjoyment of gardening, benefits are sure to follow. Planting care and harvesting of several hundred to several thousand or more glad corms will be a significant source of healthful exercise. Whatever scale of planting you choose satisfaction and enjoyment will add to you feeling of well being.

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