

of beauty. This indigenous type of beauty should be developed to its best expression, so far as this is possible in a narrow strip along the road,—for itself alone or as a foreground for a more distant view. The harmonizing of the narrow strips along the highways into the larger landscape beyond, the enframing of vistas that may be obtained from the roads, and the screening of undesirable vistas are important functions that the plantings should perform. These things should determine their design and character.



Fig. 12.—Trees planted along highways traversing a naturalistic landscape should not be disposed in definite rows.

Plantings may perform other important functions under special conditions. Along abrupt slopes or upon steep roadside banks, plantings are important in preventing severe erosion of the soil and in covering the bare and displeasing surfaces that otherwise mar the landscape. While such banks may be re-graded into graceful slopes that harmonize with their surroundings, much may be accomplished by simply planting them to hardy vines, shrubs, and trees adapted to the particular soils and exposures, thus transforming the banks from unsightly spots in the landscape into pleasing, harmonious ones.

Where the highway curves abruptly, much care should be exercised in planting the boundaries of the curve. The inside border at such points should be left fairly open to permit a free, unhindered view of vehicles approaching from the opposite direction. The outside border should be planted heavily enough to give the effect of strength and stability, such as a wall or stout fence might provide. The arrangement of the plantings, however, should be such as not to obscure desirable vistas of the landscape, which it is important to develop and maintain at these particular points.

To be most comfortable and pleasant to those who travel upon them, roads must be shaded. On our suburban streets and ordinary straight country roads traversing a comparatively level landscape, a more or less consistent and equally spaced line of trees may serve this purpose best. Where the landscape beauty is important, however, and the highway is winding over hills or across vales, such a line of trees might well prove very inharmonious in the scene. In such cases, informal plantations of trees and shrubs are to be desired, and the whole should be so composed that the road will seem to be passing through a fortunately pre-existing series of groups and masses of native plantings.

Native Plants for Roadside Planting

Such public roadside plantings may properly become the conservation grounds of native species. It is a common but unfortunate fact that in many parts of the country, especially where agriculture is particularly effective, many of the finest native species are rapidly disappearing. If our roadside plantings rather typified the original native growth of the hills and valleys, the woods, and the open fields of the sections through which they passed, it would greatly help to develop and maintain the native plant character of those localities, besides preserving for future generations many of the indigenous species that otherwise may disappear. Fortunately, Michigan is endowed with many kinds of native plants that are very beautiful for roadside adornment, so desirable, in fact, that many of them are being propagated and handled by nurseries in this country and abroad.

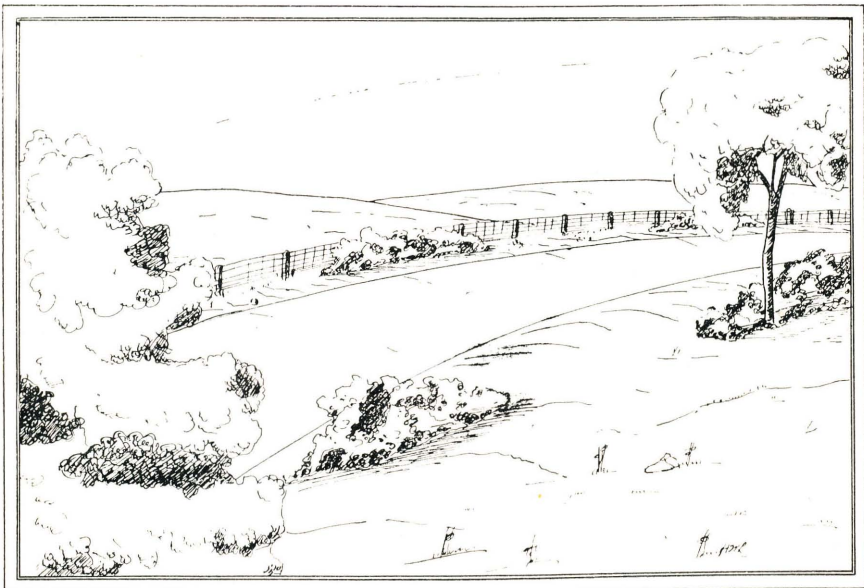


Fig. 13.—Trees and shrubs should be disposed in naturalistic groups and masses to develop the free and natural effect that characterizes the country.