although it is hardy against cold, it is evidently fastidious and does not grow well in all soils and situations. Most of the plants which have been tried in this country have perished sooner or later, and it is unusual to find either here or in Europe so large, vigorous and healthy a specimen as the one at Dosoris.

From the Abbe David's notes we learn that Xanthoceras is a tree fifteen to eighteen feet high, and exceedingly rare in those parts of China and Mongolia which he visited; that it is cultivated in the gardens of Pekin; and that the seeds are eaten by the Chinese.

At our request, Mr. Dana has sent us for the benefit of our readers the following note upon his method of cultivating Xanthoceras, which we hope will now become a more common object in our gardens:

"I first saw a plant of Xanthoceras at Baden-Baden on the grounds of Herr Max Leichtlin about the year 1884. I admired it, and Herr Leichtlin spoke of it as a new plant of great promise, which he felt sure would be an acquisition to horticulture. I secured two plants, and have been cultivating them now for eight or ten years. They are six feet high, and grow in rich warm loam. They have no protection whatever, and yet they have never lost a branch in winter, and they endure our dry summers perfectly. They are not strong-growing shrubs, but they bear flowers in great profusion, and are more beautiful when in bloom than at any other season. They ripen seeds every year, and I would be glad to furnish some of them to any one who cares to test the plant."

[Garden and Forest 6 (1893): 284-286]

CLIMBING PLANTS ON BOSTON BUILDINGS.

PROBABLY nowhere else in this country does the service performed by climbing and clinging plants in clothing and adorning the walls of buildings receive such good illustration as in and around Boston. Ampelopsis tricuspidata [now Parthenocissus tricuspidata] was first domesticated here, and has so long been a striking feature of this city as to gain for it throughout the country the familiar name of "Boston Ivy." This name, however, is seldom heard here, where it is most commonly known as the "Japanese Ivy" or the "Japanese Ampelopsis."

Ampelopsis tricuspidata had probably been cultivated hereabout for several years before it became particularly noticeable, but its popularity dates back to the Centennial year of 1876. Although for years familiar with all parts of the city and a close observer of such things, I had never noticed this plant until my return in 1877, after an absence of a year or so, when I was at once struck by its prevalence. It did not become remarkably common hereabout until about 1880. Now, however, it is seen everywhere, and is even more prevalent than its cousin, our beautiful native Virginia Creeper. It has become as characteristic of our city and suburban scenes as the White Pine is of our rural New England landscape, and one of our foremost authorities once told me that he regarded it as the greatest horticultural acquisition of the century.

Occasionally its use is excessive, but its luxuriant habit is seldom encouraged to an undesirable extent. This is probably due to the fact that one of its most conspicuous services consists in the concealment, or the amelioration, of architectural ugliness, and, fortunately, the people most liable to employ it to excess are generally the ones most responsible for bad architecture. Ugly objects are so
generally made graceful and picturesque by the kindly offices of the Japanese Ampelopsis that the instances of its over-liberal use are usually merciful concealments. The Japanese Ivy, or, still better for this particular purpose, the Virginia Creeper [Parthenocissus quinquefolia], could be usefully employed to drape the electric-wire poles, whose gaunt interminable processions make hideous the highways throughout the country, and convert them, for a large portion of the year, at least, into objects of beauty, if the necessities of the linemen, with their climbing-spurs, did not forbid. This might, however, be done with poles that require no climbing, as the posts that support the trolley-wires of the electric-railways, particularly along a road that has been adorned with central-lawn spaces, like the boulevards of Beacon Street or Commonwealth Avenue.

As a means for the mitigation of bad architecture, the Japanese Ampelopsis on our Museum of Fine Arts [then located on Copley Square] furnishes an instructive example, though it is not carried far enough. It clambered bravely over the ugly walls of parti-colored terra cotta and brick, and for a while so nearly effaced the unspeakable reliefs of the second story as to give them the charm of indefiniteness. But the trustees have since restricted the creeper to the first story . . .

Probably the building most famous for its exuberant, but not in the least excessive, growth of Ampelopsis is the Old South Meeting-house, where it creeps over an enormous expanse of gray old walls and high up on the tower, relieving the severity of the Puritan architecture with its gentle touch. The suggestion of nature amid the piles of neighboring brick and stone in the heart of the business section of the town does much to heighten the charm of the Old South’s garb of greenery. And this leads me to express dissent from only one point in the admirable editorial on the general subject of the use of clinging growths in combination with architecture that appeared in GARDEN AND FOREST a few months ago. The New York Post-office was instanced as one of the buildings where such a growth would not be in place. But to my mind it would be peculiarly appropriate there, for the reason that the architecture of that building is intensely offensive. If, by any means, an ample growth of Ampelopsis or any other creeping things could only be coaxed to embower a goodly portion of its façades, it would not only mitigate the inartistic character of the edifice, but it would serve to unite it with the remnant of the neighboring City Hall Park, from which its site was unrighteously taken, and in a measure atone for the perpetual affront of its existence . . .

One of the few redeeming features of our extravagantly praised Public Garden is the growth of Virginia Creeper and Japanese Honeysuckle, that converts the iron fence on the western side into a beautiful hedge, and the Japanese Ampelopsis that covers some of its stone posts. This creeper would perform an inestimable service if it were allowed to clamber at will over the bad sculpture in the Public Garden and the Common.

The value of trailing growths for fences is not appreciated in this country as it should be. In Germany the Virginia Creeper is put to simple and effective use for this purpose in urban public grounds. A light, low fence is made of stakes and connecting wires; the Virginia Creeper is trained up each stake and made to form graceful festoons between. Its employment in some such fashion would do good service on a place like the Cambridge Common, for instance, now a bare, unattractive expanse, having a sort of kinship with the New England rustic burying-
ground. It is surrounded by a fence composed of unhewn granite posts with squared rails of wood between. Virginia Creeper, Japanese Ampelopsis, and perhaps other twining or climbing plants, might convert this old fence into a thing of beauty. In public parks the requirement for protection of the borders sometimes necessitates guards of wire and stakes along the paths. These are often great disfigurements, and their offensive aspect, in places where they seem to be required permanently, might be at least mitigated by the use of Virginia Creeper after the German fashion . . .

Boston.  Sylvester Baxter

[Garden and Forest 7(1894): 432-433]

THE FLOATING GARDENS OF MEXICO.

The famous chinampas, or floating gardens, are a never-ending attraction of the City of Mexico, and yet little is known to the general reader regarding these curious places. Contrary to the general belief, the so-called floating gardens of the present day do not float. Many years since, however—in fact, before the conquest of Mexico by the Spaniards—the name was appropriate, for real floating gardens were then common on the lakes in the Valley of Mexico, especially in the immediate vicinity of the city. But when Humboldt visited Mexico (then called New Spain) in 1803, and Abbé Francesco Clavigero (a missionary among the Indians) a few years later, these peculiar possessions of the Mexicans were rapidly diminishing in number; and in 1826 Captain G. F. Lyon informs us that “the little gardens constructed on bushes or wooden rafts no longer exist in the immediate vicinity of Mexico (the city); but I learned that some may yet be seen at Inchimilco.”*

Abbé Francesco Clavigero describes the true floating gardens as follows: “They plait and twist Willows and roots of many plants, or other materials, together, which are light, but capable of supporting the earth of the garden firmly united. Upon this foundation they lay the light bushes which float on the lake, and over all the mud and dirt which they draw from the bottom of the same lake.”†

The common form was a quadrangle, and the average size about fifteen by forty feet, although some of the largest were a hundred feet in extent. Many of the latter contained a small hut, in which the cultivator sometimes lived; one or more trees were also growing in the centre of these largest plots. The earth used was extremely rich, and this being kept in a moist state by its proximity to the water (the elevation above it being not over a foot), the gardens were productive of the choicest vegetables and flowers, including also Maize.

The gardens of the present day are very different affairs. They do not float, but, on the contrary, are composed of strips of solid ground, usually about fifteen by thirty feet in extent, although some are larger. These plots are intersected by small canals, through which visitors are propelled in canoes. They are constructed by heaping up the earth about two feet above the water. Willows, and sometimes Poplars or Silver Maples, also a species of Cane, are often grown along

† History of Mexico, 1807, vol. ii.