

THE FRINGED GENTIAN

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WINTER SOLITUDE

The garden now is empty and cold, all is silent and unsullied whiteness. In winter after a snowfall all sounds seem to be muted. The growing season is over and all plants are having a rest. The hillsides are bleak where ferns abounded and flowers of springtime bloomed.

The sun has continued to coast to the south and during December stands low in the sky at noon, its rays barely reaching in to the garden.

The greatest joy in winter-time is to think of the beauty of coming spring and summer when sunshine again floods the glens. New green and new spring flowers.

The colorful sunrises and sunsets in midwinter impart as many hues to the garden as the moods of the stirring winds.

"This is not solitude; 'tis but to hold
Converse with Nature's charms,
and view her stores unroll'd".

-Lord Byron

BIRD NOTES

The birds hurry to shelter long before darkness approaches. Great numbers frequent the seed-feeders and suet bags.

Its delightful to hear the sweet whispered "Chick-a-dee-dee" of the Black-capped Chickadee, the nasal call of the White-breasted Nuthatch and the lesser toot of the Red-breasted Nuthatch. The sharp notes of the Downy Woodpecker, the Hairy Woodpecker and the Pileated Woodpecker enliven the scene.

The Barred Owl and Great Horned Owl- birds of the silent wing are busy keeping watch for rodents.

The ever increasing winter bird population also includes Goldfinch, Purple Finch, Cardinal, Slate-colored Junco, Blue Jay, Little Brown Creeper and Ring-necked Pheasant.

A WORD FROM OUR PRESIDENT

OUR CURATOR HONORED

Mrs. Martha E. Crone has been presented, by the Minnesota Horticultural Society, with a beautifully engraved bronze medal, given to her for her outstanding achievements in the cause of Horticulture. We are all proud of Mrs. Crone.

Clinton M. Odell, President,
Friends of the Wild Flower Garden, Inc.

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BAYBERRY CANDLES

The quaint custom of decorating our homes at Christmas time with evergreens has survived thru centuries of constant change. It remains one of the loveliest symbols of Christmas.

Candles are symbolic of Christmas. In the early days Christmas Candles were made from Bayberries, also known as Wax Myrtle, (*Myrica pennsylvanica*).

Families camped out several weeks each autumn to gather their supply of berries. In big kettles of boiling water over open fires, the women stirred the berries which men and children gathered. The melted wax was poured into pans to harden into bricks. The wax bricks were taken home and fragrant, green candles dipped. Bayberry candles are still obtainable and the fragrance lasts indefinitely.

The "Myrtle Warbler" is very fond of the berries.

ACTIVITIES

One of the longest growing seasons has been experienced. There were no killing frosts after the first part of April and none until the middle of November. The early spring blooming plants remained in bloom unusually long since the spring was continually cool, and the late fall flowers had ample time to fully mature seeds before frost.

A total of 4509 plants were set out, this includes 2160 various species of ferns in the new fern planting.

Approximately 75,000 visited the garden and enjoyed freedom from mosquitoes. They were unprecedentedly vicious in most areas this past season. The mosquito control program is working successfully.

PERSIMMON

The Ebony Family with about 300 species of tropical trees and shrubs is represented in the United States by only one, the Persimmon (*Diospyros virginiana*). This grows to be a large tree with greenish-white urn-shaped flowers, and a fruit that is edible when dead ripe.

They range from New York and Pennsylvania, south to Florida and westward to Iowa, Texas and Kansas.

Commercial ebony comes from a species native to the East Indies and Ceylon.

Experiments will be made with the Persimmon in the Wild Flower Garden.

STRANGE AS IT MAY SEEM

A single pair of meadow mice, can have a progeny of half a million in a single season.

File this issue with the others in your "Fringed Gentian" green cover.

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PLANTING OUR NATIVE FERNS

Altho many of our native ferns are quite cosmopolitan, the successful cultivation of a goodly number depends largely upon simulation of natural environments.

Pleasing results are easily obtained under seemingly adverse conditions. Given an eastern exposure and partial shade, the majority of our ferns flourish under cultivation. Many will grow on the north side of a house with fair results.

When ferns are once established they require little care, altho during extremely dry weather it is best to allow the hose to lie on the ground for the purpose of soaking. A full spray turned on them is very disastrous.

For the average gardner with only a limited area there is more varied beauty and greater interest in a mixed border, perhaps massing several species.

The spring awakening of ferns is most interesting. They all come from the ground rolled up like a watch spring.

A row of well-developed Ostrich Ferns following the foundation wall is most imposing. The plume-like fronds of this magnificent species sometimes reach a height of five feet when grown in moist areas. The fronds grow in circles and bend outward in vase-like form, combining grace and dignity.

In shaded situations a charming effect is produced by the Narrow-leaved Spleenwort. This clear-cut delicate fern makes a pretty addition to the wild garden. An exposed situation is not advised as the fronds are easily broken by wind.

The Boulder or Hay-scented Fern is considered one of the most decorative. Growing as it does from an extensively creeping rootstock it is fine for massing.

Goldie's Fern the most striking of the ferns that like to grow in moist rich soil or shaded slopes has fronds that sometimes are 3 feet long and a foot wide and bright green in color.

The Silvery Spleenwort does well in this locality altho often overlooked. Its silvery white fruit dots are its greatest beauty forming an interesting pattern on the underside of the fertile fronds.

The Marginal Shield Fern prefers a rocky dry woodland habitat, yet will grow in various situations. The blue-green color of this fern forms contrasting effects, especially with the lovely evergreen Christmas Fern which helps cheer the winter months.

The Royal and Cinnamon Ferns are desirable in the composition of woodland and bog plantings and are easy to grow. The stately and handsome Cinnamon Fern will spread and form dense growths limited only by the boundaries of moist areas. Shade and abundant moisture are essential to luxuriant growth.

The Interrupted Fern likes to wander up hillsides. It will flourish in any soil, even in open sun. It also does well in foundation plantings. The 3 to 5 feet tall fronds form a graceful fountain-like appearance. This large imposing fern is easily grown.

The Lady Fern is an all around satisfactory fern to plant altho it is persistent and aggressive, often crowding out more delicate species. It loses its beauty much earlier in the season than many others.

Maidenhair Fern, one of our best known and most distinctive ferns likes to grow in colonies in rich soil in shade or partial shade and combines well with many other varieties. This fern holds its freshness long after others have faded, even withstanding light frost.

It must be remembered that it takes some time for young plants to attain their full proportions.

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DID YOU KNOW

That reflected light causes the eyes of various animals to glow different colors in the dark-

Deer and Cat glow yellow, Fox- greenish and Rabbit pink or red. Others are Opposum, Coon, Wood Mouse, Snake, Moths and Spiders, as well as Owls and Whip-poor-wills.

RHODODENDRONS

Rhododendrons are our most ornamental evergreen shrubs. Rhododendron maximum almost becomes tree-like. It blooms in June, the large umbels, of bell-shaped, 5-lobed blossoms are rosy-purplish or white, with spotted throat and long curved stamens. The rounded cluster of blossoms are borne above umbrella-like whorls of glossy evergreen leaves. The Rhododendrons dwindle in size farther north.

The broad green leaves against a snow background shine brighter than all other evergreens.

Rhododendron Catawbiense is a more brilliant species in bloom and this remains more shrub-like. It requires partial sunlight, while maximum thrives in heavy shade of walls or woodlands.

Rhododendron carolinianum is a lower growing type with smaller leaves and is fairly sun-tolerant.

Rhododendron means "rose tree", the common name is Rose Bay.

TREES

In winter the variety of tree forms is incredible, they seem to be loveliest then when there are no leaves to hide their grace of form.

The Bitternut Hickory (*Garya cordiformis*) is a tree well worth planting for both ornamental and shade. It harbors few insects and is relatively free from disease. Being a native here it is very hardy, its durability, strength and toughness has a few superiors. The winter buds are bright yellow and the nuts are thin-shelled and bitter but relished by squirrels.

NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING

The regular annual meeting of Friends of the Wild Flower Garden, Inc., will be held at its office, 2318 Chestnut Ave., Minneapolis, Minnesota, on Wednesday, January 2, 1957, at 2:30 p.m. (Our office is in the Burma Vita Plant)

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Martha E. Crone -- Editor