



1925

History of the Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden

Winter 1924/1925

This winter Eloise Butler was again on the East Coast to visit her relatives, as had been her custom since she retired from teaching in 1911. Her residence was at 20 Murray Hill Rd, Malden, Mass.

On January 24, 1925 she writes to Martha Crone that she has been transformed into a housekeeper as her brother is still sick, her sister is feeble and she is caring for a household of eight, including a dog and three cats, but they had a jolly Christmas.(1)

In late March she returned to her rented quarters at the residence of John and Susan Babcock at 227 Xerxes Ave. from where she could walk to the Garden.

Spring 1925

Eloise Butler's first Garden Log note of the season was on April 2nd when she wrote:

"Weather very warm, but no rain for some time. *Trillium nivale* [Snow Trillium] in bloom."

On the same day she planted seven species shipped from Malden, all of which were previously planted in the Garden.

The weather was not in her favor. She wrote:

"In April, very hot weather that unduly stimulated vegetation. Then late frosts -- ice forming May 26 -- that nipped aspiring flower buds. Some things were frozen four times. Therefore, no wild grapes, no Mayapples, nor several flowers. During May, heavy rains and cold weather, so that we said, 'We'll not complain when the sun roasts us.' " (2)

Eight new species were introduced this Spring - details below. Eloise discovered one new plant in the swamp on May 18. - *Betula sandbergii* (*B. papyrifera* x *pumila*) Sandberg Birch, considered native.

Summer 1925

Summer started off with this note:

“Tornado uprooted many large trees and tore off many tops and branches. Paths shut off and plants laid low with debris of the wreckage.”

She added more detail about this storm in 1926 in [*Trees in the wild Garden: \(2\)*](#) “

The leading tree in the swamp was the tamarack. They were piled up like jackstraws by the tornado, and but few left standing. But most of the white birches, which were nearly equally abundant, were spared by reason of their deeper root system, as was also another prime ornament of the garden - a much be-photographed eight-boled white birch that dominates the eastern hillside.”

In 1912 the giant White Oak she called Monarch, had been treated for decay. Here she explains what was done and then what happened this year.

“ ‘Monarch,’ as we call him, was slowly dying atop. So, in obedience to the scriptural injunction, his dead limbs were cut off and cast away, and decayed portions of his “heart” - not essential as with humans for circulation -- were taken out and replaced with concrete. Thus, lopped and reinforced, he bade fair for many more years to hold sway. Alack and alas! In the tornado of June, large chunks of concrete were belched out and all the limbs torn off. How long will he yet stand without his crown?”

He lasted until 1940 when Martha Crone had him removed as a danger of falling on visitors.

In the summer months she obtained another eight new species for the Garden. Details below. Summer weather was hot. Eloise wrote:

“Through August and not yet fairly broken the most protracted drought ever recorded in Minnesota. The hillsides in the Reserve have suffered severely but the asters are holding their own fairly well. The usual crop of mushroom is a complete failure.” (3)



Eloise Butler with the large white oak "Monarch". Undated newspaper photo.



"Monarch" -1926 newspaper photo

Further adventures:

“Have had some pleasant outing to break general dismalness. Went out on the prairies early in July when the wood lily mingled with the tall cream-colored spikes of zygodene at its height, and on the low lands, large masses of showy moccasin flowers disported themselves. In August, spent two days at Lake Kabecona [should be Kabekona], about twenty miles east of Itasca Park. There I saw for the first time in their native haunts the spurred gentian [*Halenia deflexa*] and the northern grass of parnassus [*Parnassia palustris*]. On a creek floated the pretty white water crowfoot in full blossom, and all the land was blue with harebells.”(3)

Autumn 1925

In the Autumn Eloise obtained 2 new species for the Garden, detailed below.

Eloise, and later Martha Crone, always planted many asters in the Autumn, some in extremely large quantities. On October 10-11, Eloise planted 161 Sky Blue Aster, *Aster azureus* [*Symphotrichum oolentangiense*] from Glenwood Park. Her last log entry was on October 20-21 said

“planted from Minnehaha 301 *Aster Cordifolius* along path, east side of south enclosure and on plateau.” [*Symphotrichum cordifolium*] Heart-leaved Aster] The 'south enclosure' is one of two Garden areas Eloise had fenced in during 1924.

When the Garden closed and the office was locked up she departed for the East Coast to visit her sister Cora Pease as she has done every winter since 1911.

On the way to Malden she had a 4 day stop in Indianapolis where she also had family relatives, arriving in Malden in her cousin's automobile and wrote that it “didn't skid over a precipice as I thought it might.” While in Malden the weather was so nice that she has time to “snoop” for plant material for the Garden and she mailed some acorns of Black Oak and Swamp White Oak to Martha Crone with instructions to heel them in for her, along with some of Savory-leaved Aster, *Aster linariifolius* [now *Ionactis linariifolius*] which she thought Martha may like. She speaks again about her sister Cora being very feeble - Cora was to die in 1928. Then she gives a recipe for Quince and Cranberry Jam.(4)

Weather: The snow from the Winter of 1924/25 had all melted by the end of February and early Spring was dry, some rain arrived in May but the Summer was dry. Going into the Winter of 1925/26 there was little snow until January. Total precipitation was 7 inches below average. The tornado in June was the unusual event.

New 1925 Plants

Eloise brought into the Garden a number of plants that are not listed today on the Garden census. Many of these were native to Minnesota and a few were not. Here is a listing of most of those plants introduced this year to the Garden for the first time - the common and botanical names listed first are names she used followed by other common names for the same plant and the newer botanical classifications, if any; then follows her source for the

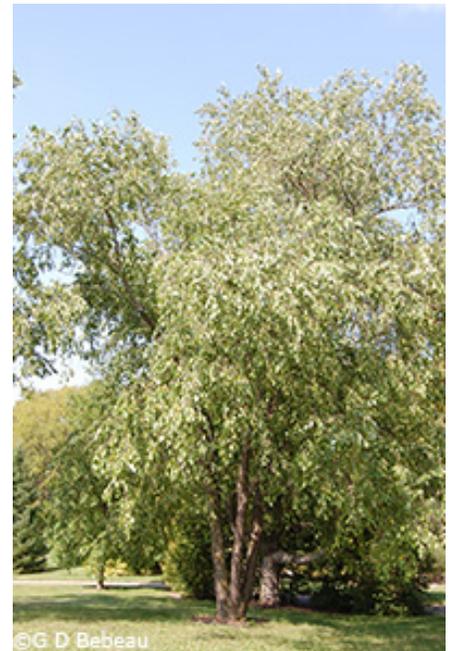


Sky Blue Aster, *Aster azureus*
[*Symphotrichum oolentangiense*]

material. 1925 is the first year the following list of plants occur in her log. "Native" indicates the plant is considered native to Minnesota (here at European Settlement time) or if introduced, long established. "Non-native" indicates it is not known to exist in Minnesota in the wild. "Introduced" means not native to North America. "Extant" indicates the plant is present in the Garden today. **Botanical classification:** Over the years Botanists have reclassified many plants from the classifications in use at the time Eloise Butler wrote her Garden Log or when Martha Crone prepared her census. I have retained the nomenclature that Eloise Butler or Martha Crone used and then provided the more current classification as used by the major listings in use today, particularly *Flora of North America*, the University of Minnesota's *Annotated Checklist of the Vascular Flora of Minnesota*, and as a fall-back source - the USDA Plants Database.

Spring 1925

- *Arabidopsis thaliana*, Mouseear Cress, introduced. from vicinity of Anoka. May 21.
- *Betula nigra*, River Birch, native, from Kelsey's nursery, Salem MA. April 18. Extant.
- *Delphinium tricorne*, Dwarf Larkspur, native, from Denison Iowa, April 22. Martha Crone planted it in 4 different years beginning in 1947.
- *Hieroloche* [*Hierochloe odorata*] "Holy Grass", Sweetgrass, not native, from Grand Forks North Dakota. May 12.
- *Mamillaria vivipara* [*Escobaria vivipara* now *Coryphantha vivipara*] Spinystar, many varieties, but probably var *vivipara* as that is only variety found in North Dakota where plants came from. Planted in the cactus rockery. April 2.
- *Marchantia polymorpha*, moss, native, from vicinity of Anoka. May 21.
- *Morus rubra*, Red Mulberry, not native, from Maquokata Iowa, May 16. Martha Crone planted it in 1957.
- *Prenanthes aspera*, Hairy stemmed Prenanthes, Native, from Point Douglas, April 30. Martha Crone planted it in 1949 and '51.



River Birch, *Betula nigra*, New Spring planting of 1925.

Summer 1925

- *Desmanthus illinoensis*, Illinois Bunchflower, native, currently on the Minnesota Special Concern list, from Prior Lake MN. August 13.
- *Halenia deflexa*, Spurred Gentian, native, from Grand Marais MN, July 9. another 4 were planted on 3 August from Lake Kabacona. Kabacona should be Kabekona. (Hubbard County). Martha Crone also planted in 1933 and 54.
- *Helianthus petiolaris*, Prairie Sunflower, native, from vicinity of Fridley, August 27.
- *Hippuris vulgaris*, Common Mare's Tail, native, from Lake Kabacona [Kabekona], August 3. (She would also use this species in 1932 at the new Mallard Pool)
- *Hudsonia tomentosa*, Woolly Beach Heather (Poverty Grass), native, from vicinity of Fridley, August 27 and also on 16 Oct from vicinity of Anoka, Martha Crone would plant it in 1936 and later years also.
- *Nelumbo lutea*, American lotus, native, from O'Brian's Lake and planted at Birch Pond, August 13.

- *Scutellaria parvula*, Small Skullcap, native, from vicinity of Orchard Gardens (ie around Burnsville MN). June 25.
- *Solidago canadensis*, Canada Goldenrod, native, from Lake Kabacona [Kabekona], August 3. Today it is not found there, but maybe it was in 1925 or maybe it was our current species, *S. altissima*.
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Autumn 1925

- *Lobelia inflata* - Indian Tobacco, native, from Warren Maine. October 14.
- *Setaria italica*, Foxtail millet, introduced, from Trenton Wis. Sept. 17.



Spurred Gentian, *Halenia deflexa* New Summer planting. Photo ©Robert Bierman, Wisconsin Flora



American Lotus, *Nelumbo lutea*, New Summer planting. Photo ©Merle R. Black, Wisconsin Flora.



Woolly Beach Heather, *Hudsonia tomentosa*. New Summer planting. Photo ©R. A. Howard @ USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database

Photo top of first page: Tamaracks in the marsh. These are replacements for the trees destroyed in 1925.

Notes:

- (1) Letter from Eloise Butler to Martha Crone, Jan. 24 1925.
- (2) *Trees in the Wild Garden*. essay in *The Early History of the Wildlife Reserve*, unpublished (copy on the Friends website).
- (3) *The Wild Garden in 1925*, Letter to Gray Memorial Botanical Chapter, (Division D) of the Agassiz Association for publication in the *Asa Gray Bulletin* (complete text on next page.).
- (4) Letter from Eloise Butler to Martha Crone, Nov. 3, 1925

References:

Garden Log - Native Plant Reserve, Glenwood Park, Minneapolis, MN by Eloise Butler

Martha Crone's *Garden Log* and her 1951 Census of plants in the Garden.

Various papers and correspondence of Eloise Butler in the collection of the Minnesota Historical Society.

Historical Climatology of Minneapolis-St. Paul Area by Charles Fisk.

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The Complete text of “The Wild Garden in 1925”:

A most unusual season --spotted, indeed, if due to sun spots. In April, very hot wether that unduly stimulated vegetation. Then late frosts -- ice forming May 26 -- that nipped aspiring flower buds. Some things were frozen four times. Therefore, no wild grapes, no May apples, nor several flowers. During May, heavy rains and cold weather, so that we said, “We’ll not complain when the sun roasts us.” June 2 a tornado swooped upon us from the northwest, uprooting trees and laying everything flat with wreckage. Fortunately, only a few lives were lost. The damages cannot be repaired in years. Through August and not yet fairly broken the most protracted drought ever recorded in Minnesota. The hillsides in the Reserve have suffered severely but the asters are holding their own fairly well. The usual crop of mushroom is a complete failure.

Have had some pleasant outing to break general dismalness. Went out on the prairies early in July when the wood lily mingled with the tall cream-colored spikes of zygadene at it's height, and on the low lands, large masses of showy moccasin flowers disported themselves. IN August, spent two days at Lake Kabecona, about twenty miles east of Itasca Park. There I saw for the first time in their native haunts the spurred gentian [*Halenia deflexa*] and the northern grass of parnassus [*Parnassia palustris*]. On a creek floated the pretty white water crowfoot in full blossom, and all the land was blue with harebells.

Strange to say, a little earlier, a single specimen of *Halenia* was brought to me from the north to identify. From the venation, I thought it must be an endogen and tried to place it in the lily or orchid families. Over the telephone I got a hint from one who knew, that it must belong to the gentian family, although the name could not be recalled. The small flowers were cream colored and spurred. Then “spurred gentian” flashed through my mind, and also the scientific name, *Halenia deflexa*, although I had no consciousness of previous knowledge. The botanist confirmed the wireless telegram. This is another instance of several experiences that I have had of unconscious registration. We all really know much more than we are aware of . . .

[Thanks to Martha Hellander for unearthing this bit of writing]