

THE FRINGED GENTIAN

(13)

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MELLOW AUTUMN DAYS

There are times when gray winds blow all day long and bury the woods paths with brown leaves, then again the golden flood of an October day. No hurry or bustle disturbs the atmosphere, peace seems to be everywhere. Then we are reminded of the lines by Shelley-

"The day becomes more solemn and serene
When noon is past- there is harmony
In Autumn, and a lustre in its sky,
Which thro' the Summer is not heard or seen.

When the summer beauty of the garden is gone, the asters like star showers take over, the fields and woods are literally tangled with asters of white and various shades of blue.

The cherry golden color of the golden-rods brightens the autumn garden. The golden-rods in the woods area bloom long after those of the prairie garden have passed. They appear like rods of gold withstanding frost and cold. Various species bloom continuously from July until October.

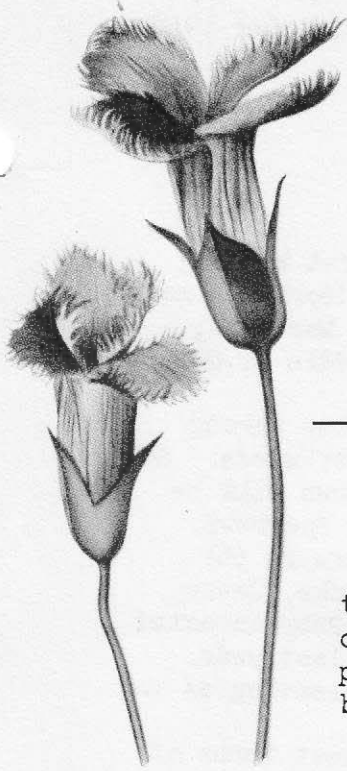
The general popularity of asters and golden-rods among the insects is fully attested by the swarms of different kinds of insects that can be found on them such as honeybees, bumblebees, beetles, wasps, flies, butterflies and even moths. The seeds of both asters and golden-rods ripen soon after blooming.

DID YOU KNOW

That the Bird's-foot Violet (*Viola pedata*) is the only violet that has beardless petals. The name evidently comes from the shape of the leaves which are cut into many parts. The bright orange-colored anthers, seem to obstruct the way to the nectar in the spur, and only long-tongued insects can reach it, such as bumblebees and some butterflies.

Here in the garden this beautiful violet is established on several hillsides including the lovely vari-colored Bicolor. An area planted several years ago blooms continuously from early spring until frost.

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



(14)

BIRD NOTES

Late September or early October generally brings the first killing frost, causing the leaves to fall in fluttering showers and depriving many insectivorous birds of their food and shelter. Flycatchers, Warblers, Vireos and others then take their departure and after the middle of October few insect eating birds remain.

This is the season of Sparrows. In countless numbers they throng woods and fields, doing untold good by destroying the seeds of weeds. Song Sparrows, Field Sparrows, Chipping Sparrows and Vesper Sparrows will be found in flocks as well as the Juncos, Tree Sparrows and Fox Sparrows.

It is an interesting fact that the first migrants to come in the spring are the last to leave in the fall. Loons, Grebes, Ducks, Geese, Kingfishers, Woodcock and Snipe remain until November. The Ruby-throated Hummingbird left the garden September 8th, the same date as last year.

A few Robins and Meadow-larks sing briefly just before leaving as tho to show the young how to sing.

By December our bird-life is again reduced to its simplest terms of permanent residents and winter visitants. Juncos, Tree Sparrows, Purple Finches, Goldfinches, Pine Siskins, Chickadees and Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers can be attracted with seeds, nuts and suet.

AMERICAN SPIKENARD

(Aralia racemosa) Ginseng Family

Also called Indian-root, Spicebush and Life-of-Man

This plant growing from a thick aromatic root, each year sends up a thick stem 3 to 6 feet high, with widely spreading branches. It dies down to the ground at the end of the season. The leaflets arranged in pinnate groups, form one large three-branched leaf, of which there are a number upon the branching stem.

It is a herbaceous perennial growing in open woodlands.

The small inconspicuous greenish-white flowers that grow in very loose, long, drooping clusters, are not at all closely assembled, and like those of most of the Ginseng family, the flowers are of two kinds, sterile and fertile.

In fall the purplish berries which resemble elder berries are very attractive and greatly relished by the birds.

AN ILLUSTRATED FLORA

A late issue of 3 volumes of "Illustrated Flora of the Northern United States, Canada and the British Possessions" by Britton and Brown, can be obtained at a greatly reduced price from the Editor of "Fringed Gentian."

(15)

LAST-OF-THE-SEASON-RAMBLE-THRU-THE-GARDEN

A woodland ramble in the garden in September and October is most inspiring and an experience to be well remembered. Not only do we find flowers but ripened fruit both edible and ornamental as well, since this is the time of ripened fruit.

The largest display since the messengers of spring bloomed in May is found at this time. Some of our finest and most interesting flowers bloom late.

The late blooming plants seem to have saved up a great deal of surplus vitality for the grande finale, as tho to compensate for the bleak season ahead.

The now shaded slopes where the sun rested in early spring before the trees leafed out and in sheltered glens where bloomed Hepaticas, Trilliums, Trout Lilies, Violets, Azaleas, Rhododendrons and countless others, now are taken over by dense colonies of White Wood Aster, Blue Wood Aster, Arrow-leaved Aster, Crooked-stemmed Aster, Zip-zag Golden-rod and Wreath Golden-rod since they are all shade loving plants. Many others of the Composite Family- the most prodigious family in the floral world are in evidence.

Follow the winding trail thru the moist meadow and where Lady's-slippers bloomed earlier the Blue Bottle Gentian, Cardinal Flower, Blue Lobelia, and Red-Turtle-head predominate.

Many of the spring plants are now dormant and no trace of them can be found.

The red, gold and maroon of the various trees adds the brilliant hues which asters lack.

The Bittersweet vine on the border fence is covered with beautiful clusters of orange berries, which finally split open to display the brilliant red globes within.

On open hillsides the clusters of bright red berries of False Spikenard contrast with the blue berries of Giant Solomon's Seal and Cohosh.

The ceaseless chant of insects is heard no more, the leaves frost crisped drop from the trees, soon will the winter be on us, snow-hushed and silent.

"There lies before me a long brown path
Leading wherever I please"

-Whitman

PLANT DISTRIBUTION

We often wonder why wild flowers do not increase more rapidly thru Nature's own processes, instead of just holding their own, or even diminishing, we would find the answer in the parable of the Sower, (plus the ravages of birds and mice).

Plants have their soil and exposure preferences. There is a striking contrast ranging from deeply shaded woods to sunny exposures where plants can endure the rigors of a hot sun. If their natural environment is tampered with they will not thrive.

(16)

STRANGE AS IT MAY SEEM

Little reference has ever been made as to why some vines twine to the right or clockwise and others to the left or counter clockwise.

Some that twine to the left are Bittersweet, Ground Nut, Hog Peanut, Wild Bean, Morning Glory, Bindweed, Moonseed, Pole Lima Beans and Hoya Carnosa.

A few that twine to the right are - Wild Hope, Trumpet Honeysuckle, Wild Buckwheat and Wild Yam.

None of these ever reverse themselves.

RARE EVERGREEN GROUND COVERS

Two closely related dwarf evergreen ground covers are Galax and Shortia, they are well established in the Wild Flower Garden.

Galax (*Galax aphylla*) native of the southern Appalachian is perfectly hardy here, so long as it can have acid soil and shade. The thick, round leathery leaves change to a bronzy crimson in the fall. The spikes of white blossoms grow 12 inches tall, blooming here the latter part of June. It likes to grow along with Trailing Arbutus (*Epigaea repens*) and spreads from runners.

Oconee Bells (*Shortia galacifolia*) like the Galax, a southern plant, it comes from the Great Smoky Mountains. It also makes itself at home here in acid shade, slightly moist but well drained.

The dainty, fringed bell-shaped white flowers are borne on 4 inch pink-tinted stems early in May. This shy, very elusive ground cover is the loveliest and rarest of North American Wild flowers. The leaves also turn a bright color in autumn and remain so thruout the winter.

NEW FERN GARDEN REPORT

A total of 1630 various kinds of ferns have been planted with utmost care in the new Fern Garden.

Many varieties could not be obtained until fall and they will be set out before cold weather closes the season, while still others are to be planted next spring.

The full result of such a planting cannot be realized until they become firmly established.

This new project has greatly stimulated both scientific and popular interest and encouraged other groups to undertake conservation plantings.

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Martha E. Crone -- Editor