

Annals of the Wild Life Reserve

The Writings of Eloise Butler

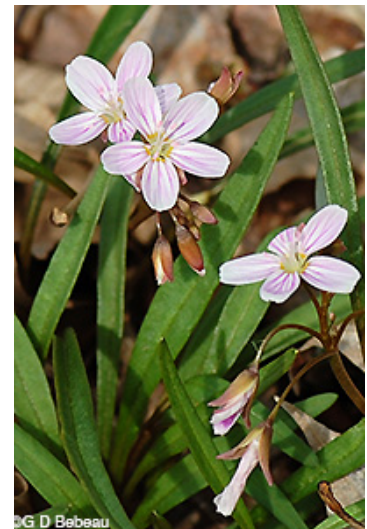


Spring Exhibits in the Native Plant Reserve - 1928

I arrived here as usual April 1. There had been abundant snow during the winter, but at this time the weather was dry and warm. On account of the drought there was nothing in evidence except white maple, hazel, willow and alder. But on the afternoon of April 2, one or two buds of hepatica showed color and the venturesome flowers of *Trillium nivale* [Snow Trillium] began to open. The hepaticas were truly wonderful the greater part of the month. They withstood two heavy snowfalls on the 5th and the 13th, and several succeeding frosts with undiminished loveliness, and now the beautiful clumps of new leaves are fully grown and will be a joy throughout the year.

Before *Trillium nivale* had finished shedding, the showy red-purple *T. erectum* appeared followed before the 10th of May by all the glorious rout - *T. declinatum* [now *T. flexipes*], *grandiflorum*, *recurvatum*, *sessile*, and last of all the endemic *T. cernuum*. The petals of *grandiflorum* have turned pink and are now beginning to shrivel, but the purple *recurvatum* with its pretty blotched leaf and the western specimens of *declinatum* are still holding their own, while *T. cernuum* is at the height of bloom.

Shortly afterward, the next great pageant was staged - literally acres of lowland bespread with [a] "cloth of gold" - marsh marigold. I sincerely pity those who are not privileged to see this flower in bloom. With marsh marigold came lovely *Mertensia virginica* (Virginia Bluebells) delighting the eye with its pink buds and lead-blue bells. At this writing the northern *M. paniculata* [Tall lungwort] is beginning to blossom. At the same time dense mats of spring beauty, *Claytonia virginica*, vivified the swamp. The pretty bell is a welcome spreader. its seeds are widely scattered, and the flower crops up in unexpected laces, while *C. caroliniana*, with similar flower but shorter and broader leaf, remains stationary.



Above: Virginia Spring Beauty, *Claytonia virginica*. Photo ©G D Bebeau

May is the time of the flowering shrubs. Shadbush came early and soon disappeared, so also did the wild thorn, *Crataegus rotundifolia*. I have yet to know if anything can surpass *Malus coronaria* in wealth of bloom. *Cornus stolonifera* [now *Cornus sericea*] is now in full blossom and the other dogwoods and all the viburnums are preparing to follow speedily.

In April, the pretty yellow *Viola rotundifolia* came and went, but the others were at their height the middle of May. The mats grow larger and denser every year. The prettiest one of all is . . . *V. septentrionalis*. It is clear white with a pale blue center and favors damp soil.

I had a clump of twisted stalk, *Streptopus roseus*, as big over a bushel basket. It is a charming plant with the habit of *Uvularia* and hung with many tiny pink bells. The "twist" is in the pedicels.

The west path in the Reserve is called "Geranium Path," thickly beset, as it is, on either side with *Geranium maculatum*. One would think that nothing else could find room there. But no, there is a succession before and after their advent. *Phlox divaricata* is now in the ascendant. It came in late this season. I have known it to blossom with violets. I never tire of this phlox in many shades of pink and blue lavender merging into white. . .

Masses of May apple, *Podophyllum peltatum*, and the cypripediums - *C. parviflorum*, *pubescens* and *acaule* now lend a tropical air to the Reserve. One clump of *C. candidum* has over forty blossoms. June 15 is expected to usher in the crowning event of the year - our wonderful state flower, *Cypripedium hirsutum* [this species name was used by Eloise quite a few times in reference to the state flower, the Showy Lady's Slipper, but all current references state that *C. hirsutum* is an old synonym for the Moccasin Flower, *C. acaule*.]

Thanks to Martha Hellander for unearthing this essay.



Above: Showy Lady's Slipper, *Cypripedium reginae*. Photo ©G D Bebeau

The text of this article is one of a number of short essays that Eloise Butler wrote while curator of the Garden that after her death were collected in a series titled *Annals of the Wild Life Reserve*, but most were never published. This essay, however, was sent to the Gray Memorial Botanical Chapter, division D, of the Agassiz Association for their circular bulletin. Eloise was a member of Division D (the middle west) from 1908 until her death. Those bulletins were circulated among members by postal round-robin circulation. The Agassiz Association was founded in the late 1800's to be an association of local chapters that would combine the like interests of individuals and organizations in the study of nature but after 1901 was largely defunct and only the Gray Memorial Botanical Chapter, with its several divisions, was still active and remained so until 1943.

The Wild Botanic Garden in Wirth Park, became the "Native Plant Reserve" and was then renamed the Eloise Butler Wild Flower Garden in 1929.

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