

The Writings of Eloise Butler



Hawthorn of World Fame through Poetry and Prose of England, Virginian Waterleaf, White Lily and Geranium Featured in June - June 4, 1911

Many are the allusions to the hawthorns of England in poetry and prose. Indeed, the very name, England, calls up to the observer of plants a mental picture of hawthorn thickets and hedges. It is pertinent to ask why writers neglect to extol the American species. For our hawthorn trees or shrubs are of extreme beauty, when covered with their snowy fleece of bloom, or when glowing with the sweet tasting, stony bright red "thorn apples." The leaves of the hawthorn may have margins varying from toothed to lobed or divided. The thorns may be long and stout, or few and feeble; thus belying the name.

Of all the botanical mazes, that of the hawthorn is the most intricate. In Gray's seventh edition, no less than sixty-five species of the genus are described, as well as many varieties. Some botanists go so far as to affirm that every individual is a different species. When the ordinary student wearies of cudgeling his brain over minute differences of stamen, nutlet or whatnot, he ignominiously names the species "*Crataegus sp.?*" or passes on the puzzle to the greatest authority, Professor Sargent, the director of the renowned Arnold Arboretum of Boston. Those desirous of extending their acquaintance of hawthorns may see grouped together in this arboretum the largest collection of both native and foreign species known to the world.



Virginia Waterleaf, *Hydrophyllum virginianum*.

At this time hydrophyllum [*Hydrophyllum virginianum*], the Virginian waterleaf makes a profuse growth in rich woodlands. It may be recognized by the pinnately divided leaf, often blotched with white, and the somewhat showy flower cluster made up of lavender colored bells to which a touch of fragile grace is added by the slender protruding stamens.

Close by the waterleaf, may be seen some of the *smilacinas*, or False Solomon's Seal[s], [such] as the star-flowered with a sparsely

flowered raceme of small white blossoms [now classified *Maianthemum stellatum*]; *Smilacina racemosa*, stouter, with larger, coarser and smaller and more numerous compactly



Starry False Solomon's Seal, *Maianthemum stellatum*.

clustered yellowish flowers, [False Solomon's Seal, now classified as *Maianthemum racemosum*]; *S. trifolia*, similar to and equally beautiful, but of lower habit than the leafy stemmed *stellata* and affecting bog lands [now named Threeleaf false lily of the valley, now classified as *Maianthemum trifolium*]; last of all, the two-leaved *Maianthemum canadense*, the lowliest and loveliest - often called wild lily-of-the-valley [or Canadian Mayflower].

The latter species is not classed with the *smilacinas* because it has four floral leaves and four stamens instead of six. [Classification of these has since changed.] All of these species are decorative in fruit as well as in flower, for they have red berries.

Fortunately, those who are interested may see growing by the side of the smilacinas the real Solomon's seal [*Polygonatum biflorum*], similar in habit to *Smilacina racemosa*, but with a few drooping, elongated, green flower bells above the leaves, all along the stem, succeeded in time by dark purple berries. Why called Solomon's seal, do you ask? Burrowing in the earth will disclose a fleshy underground stem scarred at interval with rounded, shallow pits that have been likened to a seals - a seal for each annual aerial stalk. "Venerable is Solomon" you will exclaim, if you attempt to trace their number.



Canadian Mayflower,
Maianthemum canadense.



Red Baneberry, *Actaea rubra*.

In the same vicinity is the Baneberry, more noticeable in fruit than in flower. One species bears large red berries [*Actaea rubra*], and another white, on short red stalks [*Actaea pachypoda*]. The flowers are inconspicuous and white; the leaf, large and branched, composed of many small leaflets.

Few are unable to name the Wild Geranium [*Geranium maculatum*] when they observe the form of the leaf, the flower cluster, and the flower. [Photo below] This geranium enlivens large expanses of woodlands with its purplish flowers. The significance of another name - cranesbill - is seen when the blossom goes to seed, forming a birdlike beak, from the base of which uncurl fine little seed-like fruits.



Notes:

The text of this article, along with photos by Mary Meeker of Virginia Waterleaf, Wild Geranium, Hawthorn, Wild Lily of the Valley, Smilacina and Star-flowered Smilacina, was published on Sunday June 4, 1911 in the *Sunday Minneapolis Tribune*. It was one of a series of weekly articles Eloise Butler published in 1911 to help acquaint the public with her newly established Wild Botanic Garden in Glenwood Park. Most of the plants she discusses are extant in the Garden today. In brackets within the text, and in the notes, have been added the necessary common name or scientific name, that she did not list in her article. Nomenclature is based on the latest published information from *Flora of North America* and the *Checklist of the Vascular Flora of Minnesota*.

Photo of Eloise Butler, ca. 1920, at top of page courtesy Minneapolis Public Library. Other photos ©G D Bebeau or as credited.

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