The Writings of Eloise Butler

Flowering Spurge Graces Roadside and Prairie in Late summer; Varieties of Yellow Blooms Classed as "Sunflowers" Confusing. - July 30, 1911

On dry or sandy soil by the roadsides and on the prairies, throughout the rest of the season, will be found the flowering spurge, *Euphorbia corollata*. On account of its white, filmy, lace-like inflorescence, it is much used by florists to set off other flowers in bouquets.

Flowering Spurge, *Euphorbia corollata.*

What seem to be petals in the flower cluster are colored bracts. The flowers themselves are inconspicuous. The euphorbias form a large family of highly specialized plants, including the small-leaved, pestiferous weedmats [or sandmats], poinsettias and trees in the tropics. One of the characters is a milky sap, which is, in the rubber tree, now indispensable to man. A wild species, with leaves about the flowers deeply margined with white, is cultivated under the name of mountain snow [or Snow on the Mountain, *Euphorbia marginata*].

The painted leaf [or Wild Poinsettia, *Euphorbia cyathophora*]. a quaint little native euphorbia, a newcomer in the wild garden, is like a miniature poinsettia, the bracts being blotched with red. Often trained against the wall in greenhouses is a tropical species, a stout vine covered with cruel thorns [Christplant, *Euphorbia milii*]. One might well believe that from this was plaited the crown that symbolized the agony of the world.

Snow on the Mountain, *Euphorbia marginata*. Photo Patrick J. Alexander, USDA-NCRS Plants Database.

Wild Poinsettia, *Euphorbia cyathophora*. Photo ©G D Bebeau

Very confusing are the many varieties of yellow blooms which the amateur is likely to class as sunflowers. The green involucre under the head of the sunflower is made up of several unequal rows of leaves overlapping each other like shingles on a roof; while the ox-eye, mentioned in a previous article, has nearly equal rows of bracts, and the Cup Plant may be known by the large leaves united to form a cup. All the sunflowers are natives of North America, and about fifteen are found within the borders of the state. When this country was discovered, the huge-flowered species was cultivated by the Indians, the seeds affording food and oil and the stalks textile fibers. The size of the flower makes apparent an obeisance to the sun, a feature not peculiar but common to the leaves as well and to other plants to get needful exposure to light.

Cup Plant, *Silphium perfoliatum*. One of 4 Silphiums in the Garden.

Dusky glens are illuminated by the Starry Campion, *Silene stellata*, (Ref. #1) thus refuting the poet who says that the night has a thousand stars and the day but one. The poignant beauty of the flower is due to the delicate white-fringed petals that cap the green calyx bell. Some of the silenes are catch-flies and are active assistants in the campaign against the malignant germ carriers, slaying innumerable hordes by glutinous hairs.

Widowsfrill (Starry Campion), *Silene stellata*

All the food of animals is directly or indirectly prepared from the elements of earth, water and air by green plants. Plants without leaf-green chlorophyll are, like ourselves, consumers instead of producers. Among them is the Dodder, *Cuscuta*, [*Cuscuta gronovii*], an annual belonging to the Convolvulus family (Ref. #2). The seed germinates in the ground. But as soon as the plantlet can stretch to neighboring vegetation the connection with the earth dies away and it twines closely around its hapless host, drawing out the life-sap with countless, tooth-like roots.

Dodder, *Cuscuta gronovii*

It is merely a yellow, leafless, thread-like stem, which in the course of time, will wreath its victim with a beautiful garland of compact, small white flowers. The dodder is pernicious in the garden and on the farm. A very inferior quality of flower or fruit, if any at all, would be produced by plants attacked by it. It is called love vine. A less demonstrative and less self-seeking affection is certainly to be preferred. We allow the Dodder to grow in the wild garden in order "to point a moral and adorn a tale," but strive to keep it under restraint.

We will reserve our admiration for plants that make their own living, as the sweet basil or mountain mint. [*Pycnanthemum virginianum*] It needs no other charm than its sweet fragrance, although the flat-topped flower clusters have a cool gray, artistic tone.

To this agreeable list we may add another mint, Wild Anise (Ref. 3), which has long, whorled spikes of blue flowers. The leaves are white beneath. When bruised they exhale an odor like that of anise.

Virginia Mountain Mint,
Pycnanthemum virginianum

Anise Hyssop, *Agastache foeniculum.*

Tours to the Garden. The following was also printed.
Miss Butler will conduct parties through the Wild Botanic Garden in Glenwood Park, Tuesday and Thursday mornings, meeting them at the terminus of the Fourth and Sixth Avenue Street Railway, Sixth and Russell Avenue North, at 10 o'clock. Also Saturday & Sunday afternoon, meeting then at 2:30 o'clock at the same place. One hour later on the same days, persons coming by automobile or carriage will be met at the entrance to the Garden, on the boulevard, at a point northeast of Birch Pond in Glenwood Park. To reach Birch Pond, turn in at the left on Western Avenue where the Park Boulevard intersects the avenue.

Notes:
1. *Silene stellata* is sometimes called Widowsfrill. Eloise first planted this species in the wildflower garden in 1910
2. Morning Glory Family. Dodder, *Cuscuta gronovii*: The newer family classification for this plant is CUSCUTACEAE - Dodder Family. Eloise first noted the presence of this plant in the wildflower garden in 1911.
3. Blue giant-hyssop, or Fragrant Giant-Hyssop, *Agastache foeniculum*. Eloise Butler planted it in the Garden first in 1908.

The text of this article, along with photos by Mary Meeker, was published on Sunday July 30, 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 Some 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.*

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