N E W S L E T T E R

NORTH CAROLINA WILD FLOWER PRESERVATION SOCIETY

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

May I express my thanks to each of you who have had a part in the preparation of our newsletter.

One very definite way in which each gardener can conserve the beauty of our native flora is to take care of the plant life on his or her own property. I am including a copy of the laws for the protection of wild-flowers.

Let us work together to make this a very active and progressive club year.

Sincerely yours,

Mrs. Paul R. Spencer

THE DISTRIBUTION OF WILD FLOWERS IN RELATION TO PLANT SUCCESSION

Abstract Presented at Fall Meeting

By Dr. B. W. Wells

In the normal Piedmont upland succession few wild flowers occur in the primary crabgrass community. Many more, however, are to be found in the succeeding tall weed communities (aster, ragweed, horseweed, etc.). With the advent of the broom-sedge grasses, the wild flowers are almost eliminated by the severity of root competition. The next stage involving juvenile pines is still very low in number of species but when the pines become tall and the hardwood invasion is taking place the wild flowers make a real comeback reaching their maximum in the final hardwood forests of oak and hickory on the uplands and south slopes and the beech and maple of the north slopes and low ground. Thus it may be seen clearly that for the Piedmont and mountains as well, wild flower preservation is involved in hardwood preservation.

In the mountains, the successional story is much the same except the hardwoods tend to take over the old fields and abandoned pastures more quickly. Frequently no pine stage occurs. At the high altitudes shrub and grass balds occur and these are most attractive wild flower areas. A large rhododendron bald in early June is perhaps the most beautiful natural floral display in the entire country.

In great contrast to the Piedmont and mountains is the situation in the lower coastal plain where a reverse succession has taken place. Here under the impact of both the Indian and white man initiated fires the swamp forests on peat lands have given way to shrubs and these in turn where the peat has been destroyed and the poorly drained mineral soil exposed, have been taken over by herbaceous perennials. Most of these are extraordinarily beautiful wild flowers. These natural gardens are known locally as savannas and are without question the finest wild flower areas of the herbaceaous type in the eastern United States. Strangely enough, to keep a savanna in full wild flower production, it must be burned every year.

Most unfortunately these fire-made savannas are few and restricted because of drainage and attempts to grow crops on them. Such has been the fate of the beautiful big Savanna near Burgaw in Pender Co.

In spite of high soil sterility, the sandhills present numerous showy wild flowers. These may be found in almost every stage of the woody plant succession.

NATIVE EVERGREENS FOR PIEDMONT NORTH CAROLINA

By Lionel Melvin

In a state which nature has endowed so generously with a widely varied vegetation, North Carolina's Piedmont is conspicuously lacking in winter greenery. Pines, cedar, and scattering American holly are about all that we have here, and even the pines are chiefly adventive. The mountains in the West and the coastal plain in the East offer greater varieties of evergreen shrubs and trees - so much so that in certain areas of these regions change of seasons affects very little the appearance of the landscape.

In keeping with my policy of using on my grounds in Pleasant Garden as many plants native of the state as possible, I have for the last three years experimented with the culture of Eastern and Mountain plants. For the benefit of those members of the NCWFPS who are interested in growing some of the evergreens native of the state, an account of my experience with them is here passed on with the hopes that they may profit from my experience.

Rhododendrons from the mountains have done fairly well and would, I think, do better if I had semi-shady locations in which to grow them, yet the sunny exposure is offset somewhat by keeping the roots cool in summer with a mulch of oak leaves. March winds seem to harm the plants more than the sun, and to check this, hardy evergreens have been planted on the southwest side. Stump-dirt for fertilizer and a small application of aluminum sulphate two or three times a year to counteract the alkilinity created by earthworms rounds out all the attention that they get.

The myrtles and gallberries of the coastal plain lend themselves well to the soil and climate of the Piedmont. All three of the myrtles (Wax, Carolina and Dwarf) have withstood the severe droughts of 1953 and 1954 with very little attention. The High Bush and Low Bush Gallberries have done well when mulched through the summer. What has surprised me most is my success and partial success with the evergreen trees and shrubs of the eastern bays and swamps. The Loblolly Bay with its large Camellia-like white flowers has produced blooms for two seasons growing on upland, made acid with peat and oak leaves. The Tetter-Bush (Lyonia lucida) and Fetter-Bush (Leucothoe axilaris) thrive in similar soil, and my latest discovery is that Cassandra, (Chamaedaphne calculata), which is truly a bog plant, can be grown here in soil suitable to azalea culture. This is a graceful little spreading plant with leaves that resemble those of Boxwood and that remain green most of the winter. In the spring, the terminal branches form leafy one-sided racemes of small white flowers. I have a border of this along the rock boundary of a bed at the north corner of my house. The effect is delightful.

The above are a few of the evergreens native to the state that I have growing on my grounds in Pleasant Garden, near Greensboro in Guilford County, North Carolina. Others such as the Vine Blueberry, Twinberry, Sand Myrtle and Red Bay are equally as promising when given special attention. They do much to erase the bleakness of winter in the Piedmont.

THE FALL MEETING

Umstead Park, between Raleigh and Durham, was the scene of the fall meeting of the Wild Flower Preservation Society. Here more than twenty-five members and guests gathered at the camp shelter, deep in the heart of the pines, for a business meeting, program, picnic lunch, and hike through the park.

Dr. B. W. Wells, the speaker for the meeting, delighted the wild flower enthusiasts with a history of plant succession in North Carolina. (An abstract of his talk is presented in a separate article in this newsletter.) Dr. Wells, in his very educational and inspiring lecture, especially stressed the necessity for educating the public to appreciate Nature, saying that there is very little need for preserving plant life if there is no one to appreciate it.

Mrs. Paul Spencer presided over the business session, during which the preservation of the Pyxie Moss and the planting of a wild flower plot in the Elizabethan Garden were the chief topics. The members voted to wait until the Garden was ready for planting before taking definite action toward planting a wild flower plot there. Mrs. Spencer appointed Dr. H. L. Blomquist, Dr. Hollis Rogers, Dr. B. W. Wells, and Mr. Lionel Melvin as a committee to invesitgate the possibilities for preserving the Pyxie Moss in its native haunts.

The picnic lunch, held in the main camp shelter, was a highlight of the day's activities, with good food and good fellowship combining to make a delightful event for members and visitors.

Mr. John Kibler, the landscape architect director of the park, led the group on a nature tour, with Dr. H. R. Totten and Mr. Lionel Melvin assisting him in pointing out interesting trees and other plants along the way.

(From "General Statutes of North Carolina")

PROTECTION OF WILD-FLOWERS, SHRUBBERY, ETC.

14-128 (a). Any person, not being on his own lands, or without the consent of the owner thereof, who shall, within one hundred yards of any State Highways of North Carolina, or within a like distance of any other public road or highway willfully commit any damage, injury or spoliation to or upon any tree, wood, underwood, timber, garden, crops, vegetables, plants, lands, springs, or any other matter or thing growing or being thereon, or who cuts, breaks, injures, or removes any tree, plant, or flower within such limits, or shall deposit any trash, debris, garbage, or litter within such limits, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor, and upon conviction fined not exceeding fifty dollars ($50) or imprisoned not exceeding thirty days: Provided, however, that this act shall not apply to the officers, agents, and employees of the State Highway Commission or county road authorities while in the discharge of their duties. (Chapter 14-128, General Statutes of N. C.)