

# Natural Garden in Glenwood Park

By Eloise Butler, Curator of the Wild Botanic Garden.

"Gentle spring, ethereal mildness," apostrophized in Thomson's "Seasons," has obeyed the summons in eastern Massachusetts. The frost is out of the ground and farming operations are in full force; willow pussies are no longer a novelty; the purple cowls of the skunk cabbage have been some weeks above the ground; elms, red maple and hophornbeam are in blossom; the lawn mowers are busy on Boston Common; the gardens are cheery with the early flowering bulbs and the golden bells of Forsythia.

But loyal Minnesotans, in spite of present cold winds, gloomy skies and heavy frosts o' nights, will stoutly say with Lowell:

"I like our back'ard springs  
That kind of hagggle with their greens  
and things,  
An' when you 'most give up 'twithout  
more words,  
Toss the fields full o' blossoms, leaves  
an' birds;  
Thet's Northun natur', slow an' apt  
to doubt,  
But when it does git stirred, there's  
no gin-out!"

I brought a big box of plants from Massachusetts—fringed polygala and rare ferns—to plant in the wild garden. On the hillsides transplanting was feasible, but in the bog unyielding ice was found under a thin layer of soil. However, many things of interest and beauty, peculiar to the season and conditions of weather, repay the visitor. Stems of plants furnish color harmonies in place of flowers—yellow willows crowded with silvery gray pussies, osier dogwood vividly red, birches gleaming white and other individuals with all the neutral tints. The bogs are covered with a green carpet of mosses, mat-plants and tiny trailers, and here and there beautiful fronds of evergreen ferns. Patches of green in the brookbed prove to be dormant buds of golden saxifrage and forget-me-not. Who would not like to see them wake up and stir and stretch? The mosses are perennially green.

Many of them are now in fruit, and it is a good time to study them, before the attention is distracted by a showier vegetation. To mention only a few, there are peat mosses (*Sphagnum*), pale green by reason of the large water cells that render them of use to florists for keeping cut flowers and living plants fresh during transportation; tree mosses (*Climacium*) like evergreen trees in miniature; fern mosses (*Thuidium*) with a fanciful resemblance to Lilliputian ferns; white moss (*Leucebryum*); a sort of Hypnum looking as if covered with tiny green roses, and a lovely species transplanted from Massachusetts called apple moss (*Bartramia pomiformis*) from the appearance of the round spore cases.

Now, too, is the time to observe the architecture of trees before their framework is obscured by foliage. To many this is the most interesting condition of a deciduous tree. Each individual has a habit of its own, while, of course, the difference among species is more striking as to shape of head, character of spray, color and cleavage of bark, size and shape of buds. One familiar with trees can determine a species from a twig by the buds or even the leaf scars—little shallow saucers studded with a row of dots in catalpa and the ace of clubs in the walnuts.

The birds can be more easily described when they have no leafy coverts. Large flocks of junces are with us, stopping to feed on weed seeds on their way to their summer homes in the North. Cowards we need not think them if they do show white feathers as they spread their fantails in flight. Crows, robins and red-winged blackbirds were early comers, confident of warmer days. Song sparrows and kinglets sing, phoebes perch on bare boughs and flip their feathers at the weather, while bluebirds are prospecting the tall upstanding stumps for apartments suitable for housekeeping.

Miss Butler will conduct parties through the garden during the season. Engagements can be made by telephone. N. W. Colfax 1689.