

The Writings of Eloise Butler



Late Blooming Flowers Dot Meadows with White, Blue and Gold; Asters, Gentians, Lobelias, and Sunflowers Greet Field Lovers. - September 24, 1911

For the late-blooming flowers we must turn to the floodplains and meadows still glorious in the white, blue and gold of the moisture-loving asters, gentians, lobelia and sunflowers, tricked out here and there with the deep red of the Cardinal Flower- the purest red found in nature. The brilliant salvia now blooming in the cultivated gardens has a tinge of yellow in its redness, but that cannot be said of the red lobelia known as the Cardinal Flower [*Lobelia cardinalis*]. Conspicuous in this notable company is the large-flowered, pale pink *Hibiscus militaris*, [Now classified as *H. laevis*, Halberdleaf Rosemallow], locally abundant on the river bank. The hibiscus from the wild garden printed above [shown below] is *H. moscheutos* [Ref. #1] with a larger and brighter colored flower. This species is not indigenous to Minnesota but is the glory of the swamps ranging from Massachusetts to Ontario and Missouri.



Crimson-eyed Rose Mallow, *Hibiscus moscheutos* Photo Robert H. Molenbrock, USDA-NRCS Plants Database.

of its presence, and its pearly whiteness intensifies the celestial blue of Bryant's flower (Ref #3).

Most of the orchids are early bloomers. The blossoms of this delicate late-comer are arranged in a curiously twisted raceme, so that it has been given the name ladies' tresses.

The naturalized plants have enforced their citizenship on cultivated land and contest their rights by defensive and offensive methods. For instance, the Russian Thistle [Ref. #4] appears to be in its youth harmless and



Cardinal Flower, *Lobelia cardinalis*

The Swamp Betony, *Pedicularis lanceolata* [Swamp lousewort], would be of interest to the close observer, with its dense, leafy spikes of pale yellow, laterally compressed, two-lipped flowers, but who can spare a glance for it when awed by the miraculous blue of the fringed gentians that surround it? Reference was made last May to *P. canadensis* [Common or Canadian Lousewort] similar to this betony, that was abundant on the prairie and adjacent woodland slopes, early in the season.

The sweet fragrance, however, of the tiny *Spiranthes cernua* [Ref. #2], an orchid slender as a grass blade, makes one conscious



Nodding Lady's Tresses, *Spiranthes cernua*. Photo ©Merle R. Black, Wisconsin Flora.

innocent; but it grows prodigious, develops numerous short spines and over spreads the ground, destroying other vegetation. When the seeds are ripe, the plants are uprooted by the wind and, like a huge cartwheel, roll over the ground, sewing evil broadcast for another season until they come to a fence, where their advance is checked until piled to the top, when the procession is formed again.

This plant, introduced from Russia several years ago, is not a true thistle, although so called on account of its prickles. It belongs to the goosefoot family, which numbers other tumble weeds. The Smooth Pigweed, or lamb's quarters [*Chenopodium album*], whose young, tender leaves are superior to spinach for the table, is of close kin.



Prickly Russian Thistle, *Salsola tragus* L. Photo ©Stephen L. Solheim, Wisconsin Flora.

A part of the wild garden recently acquired by the park board was once used for a pasture. Consequently, several naturalized weeds, as Canada Thistles [*Cirsium arvense*] and Creeping Charley or ground ivy [*Glechoma hederacea*], are firmly established in excess. The thistle is discouraged by being pulled up wherever it shows its head, but it continually breaks out from the newly budding, creeping rootstalks. Another method is taken with Creeping Charley, who, with pretty, scalloped, round leaves and bright blue flowers, is not uncomely, if only he could be taught to keep his proper place. Various other rampant, naturalized plants, with pleasing foliage or flowers - Butter 'n' Eggs [*Linaria vulgaris*], Cypress Spurge [*Euphorbia cyparissias*], Aaron's rod [Ref. #5], Bouncing Bet [*Saponaria officinalis*] - have been planted around him, which, together with the native goldenrods, will tussle with one another for possession of the field. We shall watch the scrimmage with somewhat, we fear, of the Irish delight in a shindy.

and hold its own with odds in its favor. Tansy is found on the sites of burned down or abandoned houses in the country and is associated with days long past. The finely curt leaves have a pungent odor and the flower disks, bright and golden as sunlight are fine for large bouquets.

Your attention is called to another edible bracket mushroom *Polyporus frondosus* (Ref. #6), pale gray and velvety, and made up of many overlapping brackets. The pores on the under surface are barely perceptible to the naked eye.



A large Hen of the Woods mushroom, *Grifola frondosa*. Photo from a Kodachrome taken by Martha Crone, Sept. 25. 1951.

Last November Tansy [*Tanacetum vulgare*] also was planted among the contestants. Every root has grown and blossomed, and it bids fair to spread



Creeping Charlie, *Glechoma hederacea*

This fungus particularly affects the roots of oaks, and was found in the wild garden at the foot of "Monarch," an aged white oak. It often attains great size. One was discovered a year ago by an oak stump on the top of the highest bluff in Lake City, too big for removal. The specimen in the wild garden weighed 20 pounds. The one who took it up thought it might weight fifty as he tugged it to the waiting automobile. It was displayed of a few days on Nicollet Avenue in Mr. Hoffman's (the optician's) window, until it began to shoot its spores all over the store, covering everything with a white, dustlike powder.



Tansy, *Tanacetum vulgare*



Mullein (Aaron's Rod), *Verbascum thapsus*

Notes:

1. *Hibiscus moscheutos*, Crimson-eyed rose mallow. Eloise first planted this in the Garden in 1908.
2. *Spiranthes cernua*, Nodding ladies tresses first planted by Eloise in 1909. Native to the state.
3. Bryant's flower. She is referring to the Fringed Gentian, the subject of Wm. Cullen Bryant's poem "To the Fringed Gentian" which she referenced in her September 10th column..
4. Prickly Russian Thistle, now classified as *Salsola tragus*.
5. Aaron's Rod. It is unclear which plant she refers to here. In classification today, *Thermopsis villosa* carries that name but this is an east coast plant, not found in Minnesota. *Verbascum thapsus*, commonly known today as Mullein is the most likely plant as that has been naturalized in the state and Eloise noted it in the Garden on September 5 1908.
6. *Polyporus frondosus*, now classified as *Grifola frondosa*. and known as "Hen of the woods." This mushroom would be seen many times in the Garden near the big oak, including a 25 pound specimen harvested by Garden Curator Martha Crone on September 1, 1935, which she took to the Mushroom Society meeting on the 23rd of September.

This was printed at the beginning of the text:

The 100 beautiful photographs, many of them colored by hand, illustrating the wild garden in Glenwood Park and the native flowers of Minnesota growing therein, exhibited by Miss Mary K. Meeker at the state fair, may be seen hereafter on application at the public library.

For the remainder of the season Miss Butler will conduct parties through the wild garden according to appointments by telephone,
Phone, Northwestern Colfax 1689.

The text of this article, along with photos by Mary Meeker of Fantuft polyporus, Russian Thistle, Hibiscus and Swamp Betony, was published on Sunday September 24, 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*.

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.