

## Conservation of the Wild Flowers of Illinois

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Nature's garden has been ruined and in many cases destroyed by man who stands bewildered as he realizes the true situation, wondering how to repair the damage. Many meetings are planned, lectures given, and even Legislative interests are aroused, but little actual work is done about replenishing and remaking the despoiled woodlands. We in America must take a cue from our friends across the Atlantic and restore the beauties of nature in the form of natural forests (not artificial parks), wild open prairies, and in fact in every nook which can not be classed as productive agricultural land. This unproductive land could again be made to give to future generations some of its original glories.

We should start in the home, school, and community to educate the people to the beauties of nature and the healthful outdoor life. True it is today as in years gone by, many individuals lack understanding and interest in the fast disappearing native wild flowers. Nevertheless much interest has been aroused and a movement is on foot for the reforestation of many acres of waste and unproductive land, so why not incorporate in this plan a program of wild flower conservation.

Each year in Illinois, as in other states, when spring arrives the roads are crowded with the traveling public on their way to the scattered woodlands and groves to make a wholesale raid on the few remaining patches of wild flowers. The hepatica *Hepatica triloba*, trillium *Trillium grandiflorum*, lady slipper *Cypripedium parviflorum*, bloodroot *Sanguinaria canadensis*, bluebell *Martensia virginica*, white adders tongue *Ophioglossum vulgatum*, dutchman's breeches *Bicuculla cucullaria*, as well as the common violet will soon suffer extermination if this thoughtless destruction of wild flowers continues. Most of the wild flowers are so delicate that within a few hours they are wilted and withered and as a result are consigned to the roadside or ash heap, the beauty of the woodland faded. The same is true of our native trees and shrubs such as the red bud *Cercis canadensis*, dogwood *Cornus florida*, and wild crab *Prunus serotina*, which being defaced, soon die.

If we must have these native wild flowers in our yard or garden, let us make a careful study of the habitat of each flower and then select with a scientific plan the desirable environment for each particular plant in the new surroundings. For example, we know that the heavy tuberous roots of the bloodroot *Sanguinaria canadensis* can be readily transplanted into a shady nook in the wild flower garden. This is also true of the trillium *Trillium grandiflorum* and *T. sessile* and the jack-in-the-pulpit *Arisaema triphyllum*.

Illinois has passed some legislation protecting a few of the wild flowers that are becoming rare in some localities. This act, approved June 21, 1923, protects the bloodroot *Sanguinaria canadensis*, lady slipper *Cypripedium parviflorum* and *C. hirsutum*, columbine *Aquilegia canadensis*, trillium *Trillium grandiflorum* and *T. sessile*, lotus *Nelumbo lutea*, and *Gentiana crinita* and *G. andrewsii*. With the passage of this act, Illinois became the second state in the Union to pass a law protecting her plant resources.

Through the splendid organization, The Wild Flower Preservation Society (Illinois Chapter) much valuable work has been accomplished in

getting the people of our State acquainted with the native wild flowers, what flowers to protect, and how to protect the rare wild flowers.<sup>1</sup> Much interest could be aroused regarding the conservation of native flowers if there could be organized a definite program of conservation. Various societies or organizations (Woman's club, Kiwanis, American Legion) could carry on this work through posters, interesting lectures, exhibits, and community gatherings as has been done in other states. In the District of Columbia a campaign was made to save the dogwood.<sup>2</sup> Posters and pleas were disseminated through the following agencies: Theater owners, street cars, florists, merchants, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and newspapers. The results were excellent and the dogwood, so common and natural to that section of America, was saved for future generations because the public was aroused, and therein lies our strength.

Following are certain rules regarding the picking of wild flowers which could be used on posters or in leaflets for the education of the public: In picking flowers let us remember (1) That what we have picked and carried away can no longer be enjoyed by anyone else in the place which they made beautiful; (2) that although it is tempting to pick a place clean of every wild flower, most of them will probably be withered before we reach home; (3) that, most important, there will not be enough flowers left in the place to go to seed and make it beautiful again next year.<sup>3</sup>

Other educational information may be used on posters; the following has been used in Illinois to educate its citizens:

#### HELP US SAVE THE WILD FLOWERS<sup>4</sup>

\* The trillium, lady's slipper, gentian, bloodroot, columbine, lotus, and many of our loveliest wild flowers are fast disappearing from Illinois. Do not pick them—picking flowers destroys their seed. Leave them to beautify the earth. Be a lover, be an enjoyer, be a protector of wild flowers.

We must enlist the aid of the schools of our State in conservation, creating an interest among the teachers and students in Nature's gifts so that this movement will be carried into the future. Interesting lectures, posters, and visual education will implant in the receptive minds of students the proper respect, admiration, and knowledge pertaining to Nature and her ways. The student should be brought into actual contact with nature through field trips conducted by experienced teachers or nature lovers who demonstrate conservation by being satisfied with a few plant specimens and do not molest the rare specimens at all. They should be taught to study the plants in their natural environments rather than to pull them up or pick and take them back to the laboratory. If these suggestions were carried out in our schools and communities there would be little danger of some wild flowers becoming extinct and others so rare, and our new forest sanctuaries and few remaining prairies would again blossom forth in the glories of nature as in the past.

<sup>1</sup> A list, with rules for picking of the wild flowers in Illinois, has been prepared by the Wild Flower Preservation Society of Illinois for distribution to the citizens of this State.

<sup>2</sup> Nature Magazine, April, 1925, p. 249.

<sup>3</sup> Society for the protection of Native Plants, Suggestions about Wild Flowers. Leaflet No. 29, 1918.

<sup>4</sup> Wild Flower Preservation Society, Illinois Chapter, Chicago, Ill.