

SOME INTERESTING SOUTHERN ILLINOIS
PLANTS

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In order to have a proper understanding of the flora of this part of the state we need to know something of the geology of the region. A range of hills crosses the state from west to east, and at the point where the Illinois Central Railroad passes through the range, as well as farther westward, we have several geological formations represented. The best outcrops of these as seen at Grand Tower are the Onondaga, Hamilton, and Oriskany. South of these are the Burlington, Keokuk and Chester, while toward the north are the Subcarboniferous and Carboniferous as is shown by two thin layers of coal out-crop south of Makanda. But it is not the geological aspect of this one-time barrier to an inland sea in which we are interested so much as the setting it makes for a flora.

The range of hills gives us an overlapping of the northern and southern floras, as well as of the insect faunas. Speaking of the trees, the small Shellbark Hickory (*Hickoria alba*), which occurs in the eastern states as far north as central New York, is found on the uplands here. We also have at least four other hickories (*H. amara*, *H. porcina*, *H. tomentosa* and *H. sulcata* of Torret), and in addition the pecan grows wild in some places. The oaks are just as prolific as the hickories in forms, as anyone who attempts to classify them will find; and he will find also that he must be good at identifying the parentage of hybrids. Occasionally a large beech tree is to be found on the uplands of the ridge, reminding one of the eastern states.

Maples are represented in four fairly well marked forms; Sugar Maple, Soft Maple, Red Maple and Drummond's Maple. I hardly want to call the last a variety of Red Maple as the habits of growth of the trees are different and the fruits are different.

Besides the two ordinary elms we have the Winged and Semi-winged (*Ulmus alata* and *U. plumosa*). The first is often a small bush.

One of the most curious of the shrubs is the Hercules Club (*Aralia spinosa*). As seen in winter it is 8 or 9 feet

high covered with stout spines and without branches. In summer it is like an umbrella, with bipinnate or tripinnate leaves and an upright panicle of small flowers or dark colored berries.

In the cane bottoms, south of the ridge, the one-seeded Honey Locust (*G. aquatica*) has been found. It is a southern species. The other species of Honey Locust is quite common.

It seems that we should include in this list the Buck Thorn, Red Root (*Ceanothus americana*). This little shrub is just now attracting considerable attention, for a chemist in Decatur has discovered the active principle in the root and has named it Ceanothyne. This is said to be the most active vaso-constrictor known. During the revolution the soldiers used the leaves of this shrub as a substitute for tea. Another species of Buckthorn, the Carolina Buckthorn (*Rhamnus carolinana*), has been found at Grand Tower.

In the fall the roadsides and fence corners are brilliant with the red of Sumac of at least two species (*Rhus capalone* and *glabra*), but the uninitiated should look out for the poison kind. The little slender stubby species (*R. aromatica*) is to be found in the open woods. I see no reason why this interesting little shrub should not be included in the shrubberies about our homes. It is free from toxic properties.

Among other interesting shrubs are two Huckleberries (*Vaccinium arboreum* and *V. vaxillans*), and wild Hydrangea (*H. arborescens*) which are to be found along the river banks and shady cliffs. Along with these are to be found Blaider Nut (*Staphylea trifolia*), two species of Euonumus, Wahoo and Strawberry Bush (*E. atropurpurea* and *E. americana*), with the shrubby Bitter Sweet (*Celastrus scandens*). In the fall of the year the latter plant is sure to attract the attention of motorists passing through the hilly section.

So far as I know we have no climbing honeysuckle or species of *Lonicera*. Disappointed politicians are told "to go where the woodbine twineth". They will have to seek a hilly country farther to the east to find the woodbine. We have some interesting vines, however, as the southern River Grape (*V. bipinnata*), which has been

found at Grand Tower, and *V. indivisa* are not uncommon. The wild Yam (*Dioscorea villosa*) is common enough to attract the attention of travelers who find the curious pods and take them along to find out what they are. Several species of *Smilax*, some of which are called cat briers, are so plentiful that one often needs pruning shears to get through some of the thickets.

We have two species of Dutchman's Pipe (*Aristolochia tomentosa* and *A. siphon*), the first found at Grand Tower, but rarely have I seen the second. The butterfly that feeds on these is rather common, and for a time I thought the larvae fed on a related plant, wild Ginger (*Asarum canadensis*), till I found they would starve when placed on this common plant. They are better botanists than I am for I have not found either species of *Aristolochia* for a number of years.

One of the first things I noticed in coming from central New York to northern Illinois was the scarcity of annuals and herbaceous perennials in the woods. This is not true of the woods in the range of hills that cross the southern part. Here there is a blending of species of the northern and southern flora that sometimes results in new forms. *Dodocatheon meadia* of the prairies is replaced with a more delicate form, *D. frenchii*, that when grown beside the prairie form blooms two weeks later than *D. meadia*. The leaves of *D. frenchii* are broader, thinner and more lettuce-like. This species is to be found only under shaded cliffs. These cliffs contain two interesting *Heuchera rugelii*, growing out of crevices in shaded bluffs, and *saxifraga forbesii*, growing on moss-covered shelves at the base of the bluffs. According to late botanists the first is a southern sport and the latter a northern one.

There are too many interesting plants to be found here to take time to enumerate all of them. *Synandra grandiflora* of the north is met by *Clitoria mariana* of the south. Japan clover is coming in from the south and replacing our native species, *lespedeza violacea*. He who visits the woods and fields in fall or late summer will not try to identify the different species of *Desmodium* he has on his clothes, to say nothing of *Agrimonia*. The field is

rich in Asters and goldenrods, both in numbers and species.

The lower forms of plants life are well represented. The writer has found 24 species of ferns in Jackson County, and they are well represented in adjoining counties. It might be said that these cliffs and shaded retreats are the homes of mosses, and lichens are equally numerous. Besides the numerous forms of parasitic fungi that man has introduced into his cultivated plants, there are many interesting fungi. There are enough edible species to satisfy the most exacting tastes of mushrooms proper, and other edible forms, while the Amanitas are well represented, as several times they have furnished the undertaker with a job. And you do not always find a dead rat when hunting for carrion for we have several species of stinkhorn.