

BOTANY FOR MAY.

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Much information relative to plant distribution in the Maritime Provinces is stored away in the memory and the records of the older generation of systematic botanists. The ordinary teacher, however, knows little of this. I can think of no more fascinating pastime than to search for the flowers of the neighborhood, and report the dates of their appearance. Notes on their *habitat* are also valuable.

For a number of years phenological records have been asked for in Nova Scotia. What the other provinces are doing in this way I do not know. Here, however, very few teachers enter into the work enthusiastically. We who are interested in the flora of the provinces appreciate the efforts made by the faithful few. How can we induce more to help us?

After a teacher begins such work, the interest will grow. How many will begin now? This year, we have marvelled at the early spring. Flowers ordinarily appearing in May were abundant April 24th to 28th. By next spring, we shall have forgotten this. How interesting one year's records are when compared with those of a previous year. Try it.

Though these records are valuable from the climatic view point, they are more interesting in point of local distribution. For example, here in Truro, Adder's Tongue Lily is abundant. Blood-root also occurs. Many students, however, never saw them before. Annapolis Valley students exclaim "These do not grow in The Valley!" Occasionally I am asked "Do these grow in all parts of the Province?" I am forced to confess I do not know. Complete records from every section would enable me to answer more satisfactorily.

To be sure, the mere knowledge of where they grow is practically worthless. The keeping of records, however, encourages the habit of searching; and that is worth while, for the teacher who searches makes searchers of her pupils. The field habit is a good antidote for the "blues." After a hard day in school, a walk in the woods with the discovery of a new plant and its addition to the record sheet brings the nerve-cells back to a normal condition; and life again becomes worth living.

Furthermore, teachers' reports should be more specific than those of pupils. Such a report as "White violets May 1st" is better than no report;

but it is not entirely satisfactory. We have three or four species of white violets. When a teacher finds a white-flowered violet, therefore, she should take her botanical key (Spotton or Gray) and find out which one it is, reporting it by its specific name. Similarly our blue violets are not all of the same species. Examine them. Note particularly the pale blue *viola canina* of the meadows, contrasting it with the longer stalked, deep blue *viola palmata* or *cucullata* of somewhat similar places. Examine also yellow violets to determine the species. By yellow violets we do not mean Adder's Tongue Lily which is also called Dog's Tooth Violet. It is not a violet at all.

Now is a good time, too, to learn some of our species of willows. Five or six species are easily separated. Before the catkins are gone, is the time to determine them. Note that some willows are large trees; some brookside or swamp shrubs, and some dry land shrubs.

Determine similarly our species of poplars. This is an easier task. Did any reader ever notice poplar catkins branching? This is fairly good evidence that the catkin after all, is nothing more nor less than a modified branch. Watch the pistillate alder catkins in summer for evidence that they are branches. Dwarfed leaves growing among the flower scales are, to me, sufficient evidence.

Do we all know the flowers of the different maples? Which species of maple flowers earliest? Which next? Can all maple trees bear seeds? Why? Notice a half-dozen red maples that have blossoms this spring. Look at the same some weeks later for fruit. Do you find it? Which, on examination seems the more nearly perfect, the staminate or pistillate maple flowers?

Among other early blooming plants not well known to everyone are the Black Crowberry of rocky coast regions, the Broom-Crowberry of sandy bogs, the Sweet Gale of ponds and lake shores, the various *Smilicinas* of open woods, the different species of *Trillium*, *Cinquefoil*, *Geums*, *Avens*, etc., In fact, flowers will now appear faster than we can study them. Since May and June cover the blooming period of so many of our plants, is it not well to give a large portion of our school and home time to their study during these months?

A very pretty and very early flower is the *Hepatica*. Its distribution is local. In Truro we do not have it. I know of its occurrence in Pictou,