

It is the hardiness of the skunk cabbage that appeals most to the flower hunter. Deny it who may, the skunk cabbage is the first flower of the year, long in advance of all the others. Does it not well typify Canadian pluck and hardihood?

If you visit the nearest colony of skunk cabbages, while the drifts and ice still lie on the swamp, you will find smoothly rounded openings in the snow, at the bottom of which you will see the tops of skunk cabbage hoods. Plunging a thermometer into one of these openings, you will find a difference of from 4 to 7 degrees between the temperature of the plant and that of the surrounding air. Truly that is a hardy plant which can generate heat enough to not only keep off the attacks of Jack Frost, but melt out a breathing hole for itself through the ice and snow of March.

The entire plant is impregnated with an odor that combines a suspicion of skunk, putrid meat and garlic. This is supposed to have been supplied by Nature to attract certain flies which delight in foul odors. These flies enter the hood of the skunk cabbage, seek the florets on the rounded spadix within, become dusted over with pollen, and fly out to carry this pollen to another cluster of florets, thus bringing about cross-fertilization.

After the time of flowering, the vivid green crowns of leaves, often of great size, spread themselves to the air of May.