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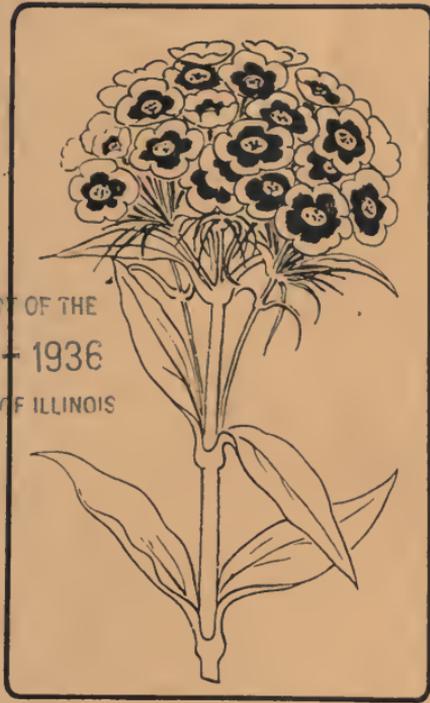
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Old-Fashioned Garden Flowers

BY
DONALD CULROSS PEATTIE



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BOTANY
LEAFLET 19

FIELD MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
CHICAGO
1936

The Botanical Leaflets of Field Museum are designed to give brief, non-technical accounts of various features of plant life, especially with reference to the botanical exhibits in Field Museum, and of the local flora of the Chicago region.

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STEPHEN C. SIMMS, DIRECTOR

FIELD MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
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BLEEDING HEART

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FIELD MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
DEPARTMENT OF BOTANY
CHICAGO, 1936

LEAFLET NUMBER 19
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OLD-FASHIONED GARDEN FLOWERS

THE EDITOR OF THE

DEC 3 - 1936

FOREWORD

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

Our grandmothers and grandfathers grew many flowers now seldom seen and best known through old prints, poems, and family traditions. The change in our garden flora is due to several causes. The addition of the best of Japanese and Chinese horticulture to traditional English gardening resulted in newer, bigger, brighter blossoms, more continuously in bloom, which naturally superceded old and more modest plants.

But not all old-fashioned flowers were modest. A good many are out of favor precisely because of their bold hues. Our forebears esteemed "nosegays" of tumultuous colors more than we; they admired "foliage plants" and freaks and sports and excessive "doubling." Also they grew a number of plants rather for their medicinal properties than for their beauty.

Nevertheless, some of their garden pets were charming and deserve to be better known today. They are still to be procured and it is a pity to be led by fashion in so perennial a world as the flowers'.

In this little leaflet shrubs, house plants, and kitchen garden "seasonings" have not been included. Excluded too are many flowers that are just as popular today as formerly, like hollyhocks, pansies, stocks, and snapdragons.

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JOB'S TEARS

(*Coix Lacryma-Jobi*)

This loose growing annual grass from the East Indies was grown for its "beads" or "tears." This structure, a woody thickening of the flower-stalk, contains the female flowers; the male flowers protrude from it. When polished and strung together these gray "tears" make interesting necklaces. Magical properties are often ascribed to these beads. The culture of Job's Tears is continued in the southern mountains. A variety with white-striped leaves is a favorite.

East Indian annual, Grass family, Summer.



GRAPE-HYACINTH

(*Muscari botryoides*)

Grape Hyacinth, often called Blue Bottles, resembles Hyacinth in a general way. The little jug-shaped flowers hang thickly from the short stalk, and are white, lilac, or generally an intense blue-purple, like grape. Their odor, called by some musky and by others likened to the smell on a baby's mouth, lingers in the memory. Where old gardens have been, Grape Hyacinths remain, lost amid the grasses; if they had more inches they would still be popular.

European bulbous perennial, Lily family, Early Spring.



CROWN IMPERIAL

(*Fritillaria imperialis*)

A very fancy sort of fritillary was this plant with its drooping yellow or red, single or double bells and its flaring bracts. The leaves were often white- or yellow-striped, and the whole plant was showy enough for any taste—but a bad odor has caused its banishment in favor of the lovely Checquered Fritillaries of today. This bulbous flower came from temperate western Asia.

Asiatic bulbous perennial, Lily family, Early Spring.



TIGER LILY
(*Lilium tigrinum*)

This superb lily, easiest of all to grow, ought not to be neglected even for the new lilies. The stem, 2-7 feet high, is purplish brown covered with white down, and bearing up to 100 deep green leaves. The flowers, 1-15 on a stalk, have bright salmon red segments spotted purplish black. Double forms occur, the only good double lilies known.

Asiatic bulbous perennial, Lily family, Early Summer.



JONQUIL

(*Narcissus Jonquilla*)

The name Jonquil is often wrongly applied to the Daffodil. Jonquils are known by their quill-shaped leaves, each slender stem bearing 2-6 small golden yellow flowers with a very low crown at the center. They exhale an intense, sweet perfume. For reasons not comprehensible, this exquisite flower, native in the Mediterranean basin, is not often grown now. The broad-mouthed Hoop-Petticoat Daffodil (*Narcissus bulbocodium*) which looked like a lady in yellow crinolines, is also seldom seen today.

European bulbous perennials, Amaryllis family, Early Spring.



FOUR O'CLOCK

(*Mirabilis Jalapa*)

Often called Marvel of Peru, this white, red, or yellow flower opens in the afternoon or stays open all day in cloudy weather. This elegantly shaped flower fell into disfavor because it is not suitable for picking, and a hurried age is less interested in watching the leisurely opening of nocturnal flowers. *Mirabilis longiflora* is another and more aristocratic species, deliciously fragrant at night, but it is now quite unknown to most gardeners.

Tropical American annual, Four O'Clock family, Summer. .



COCK'S COMB

(*Celosia cristata*)

When brought to what the judge of the county fair considers perfection, the farm wife's Cock's Comb is a sport with wizened leaves, flattened stem and a crinkled mass of what looks like red, yellow, purple, orange, or amaranthine velvet. But it is in reality a contorted inflorescence. Cock's Comb is, however, returning to style.

Tropical annuals, Pigweed family, Summer.



LOVE LIES BLEEDING
(*Amaranthus caudatus*)

Transformed from the barnyard Pigweed by having its clustered flowers turned to blood red is this old favorite. Prince's Feather (*Amaranthus hypochondriachus*) was a similar, heavy-headed species with flowers like red or purple plush, once greatly admired. *Amaranthus gangeticus* is another species, often called Joseph's Coat, which is still sometimes grown as a pot herb in Chinatown under the name of *Hon-toi-moi*.

Tropical annuals, Pigweed family, Summer.



SWEET WILLIAM
(*Dianthus barbatus*)

An old English herbal tells us that "Sweet Williams are worthy the respect of the Greatest Ladies who are Lovers of Flowers." The French name "oeillet" seems to have been corrupted to "Willy"—whence our William. This prim flower stands as crisp and bright in the garden as girls in calico.

European perennial, Pink family, Summer.



CLOVE PINK

(*Dianthus Caryophyllus*)

This lovely flower, the single or hardy Carnation, was the Gillyflower about which the first colonists often wrote though that name is now applied to the Stock. The old Garden Pink or Pheasant's Eye, a gay but untidy flower, illustrates that the modern color adjective "pink" comes from these flowers, named thus because they were "pinked" or slit, fringed, or spotted.

European perennial, Pink family, Summer.



LONDON PRIDE

(*Lychnis chalcedonica*)

A flower of magic and Midsummer Eve, this was called "Flower of Jerusalem." From Japan it travelled westward, and the Crusaders are said to have brought it home, together with lilies and saffron. The old English name for it is Maltese Cross. Only in New England was it called London Pride. Its uncompromising scarlet is, nowadays, considered too clashing with most other garden hues. Dusty Miller (*Lychnis coronaria*) is a dignified old flower with solitary dark red blossoms.

European perennials, Pink family, Summer.



PORTULACA

(*Portulaca grandiflora*)

In the century since it was discovered on hot plains of southern Brazil, *Portulaca* has risen and fallen again in favor. Often the railway station-master grows them in his cindery garden, for they are as robust as the taste to which their bright colors appeal. With their orange, rose, scarlet, crimson, deep red and pure white blossoms, they make a Topsy's bouquet. On cloudy days *Portulacas* sulk and close their eyes.

Tropical American annual, *Portulaca* family, Summer.



BOUNCING BET

(*Saponaria officinalis*)

People gave Bouncing Bet an honorable place in the olden garden. Her somewhat insipid pink petals (often double) and her rustic aroma (scarcely a perfume) were not scorned in a more innocent age. But with improving standards, and the influx of Oriental horticulture, she was seen to be a bit plebeian and now she lives like a waif in the ditches and streets. These she graces, still fresh, buxom, and, indeed, irrepressible.

European perennial, Pink family, Summer.



MONKSHOOD

(*Aconitum Napellus*)

Deep blue-purple were the cowls of Monkshood in old style "back borders." But blue-and-white varieties are also known. The leaves look like a Larkspur's. Being an autumn flower, this is a choice addition to the garden, but its intensely poisonous nature inspires fear. Even honey made from its nectar is dangerous. The root yields a powerful drug.

European perennial, Buttercup family, Autumn.



BLEEDING HEART

(*Dicentra spectabilis*)

Although this brilliant flower with rosy red petals (the inner white) only reached England in 1847 from the island of Chusan, it was taken up rapidly in popular favor and is rich in old home associations. It is related to our native Dutchman's Breeches, but is far showier, like an old-fashioned valentine.

Japanese perennial, Fumitory family, Spring.



WALLFLOWER
(*Cheiranthus Cheiri*)

A native of Greece, this flower with its odor of violets is still a favorite in England. Here it must be treated like a biennial, which is its only obvious drawback. Its petals are either a rich sunset yellow veined with brown, or a soft glowing Rembrandt brown, darker veined. A happy brown is a rare shade in gardens and was rightly prized by our grandmothers.

European perennial, Mustard family, Spring.



HONESTY

(*Lunaria annua*)

The English traveller, Josselyn, who visited Boston first in 1638, reported that "White Satten groweth pretty well." Gerarde, last of the great herbalists, wrote: "We call this herbe, in Norfolk, sattin, and among our women it is called honestie." Pope's Money is another old name. It is not the pink-red flowers (too sickly for some tastes—but there are blue and white varieties) that gave this plant its favor, but the satiny partitions between the pods, like silver coins, which make a lasting winter bouquet.

European annual, Mustard family, Spring.



GIANT SPIDER PLANT
(*Cleome spinosa*)

In old southern gardens this striking flower, with its long blue or purple stamens, spreading like slender spidery legs sprawling from the great frail, clawed petals, is still a favorite with country people. The petals are white to rose-purple. The drawbacks of this showy flower are its clammy stem and strong odor. It is giving place to its relative, Rocky Mountain Bee Plant (*Cleome serrulata*), which is free of its disadvantages.

Tropical American annual, Caper family, Summer.



HEN-AND-CHICKENS

(*Sempervivum tectorum*)

Like an old hen ruffling out her plumes to shelter her scurrying chickens is this fussy rosette of fleshy leaves, with its many little rooted offsets clustered about it. The specific name *tectorum*, meaning "of the house-tops" indicates where it was grown in Old World villages. Our forefathers greatly admired a curiosity, especially a facetious one, like this Houseleek. But the modern favor, in the same vein, has deserted the Sedum family, and gone over to Cacti.

European perennial, Sedum family, Summer.



DITTANY
(*Dictamnus albus*)

Both stem and aloof white flowers of Dittany, called also Gas Plant or Burning Bush, give off a volatile oil that great-grandfather liked to ignite with a spark from his flint. This feat can be performed (if at all) on still, heavy summer evenings, the oil being thickest just below the flowers. The glossy, lemon-scented leaves are valuable for the back border. Some clumps have been known to outlive father, son, and grandson.

Eurasian perennial, Citrus family, Summer.



GARDEN BALSAM
(*Impatiens Balsamina*)

Closely related to the Touch-me-nots of our woods, the Garden Balsam reached England from India in 1596. Modern garden esthetes would permit us to grow white or pink balsams, but the kinds that they liked in the old colonies were bold red and yellow balls of big double flowers. This is the kind that the Pennsylvania Dutchman still grows, along with portulacas and tub oleanders.

Tropical annual, Touch-me-not family, Summer.



PRIMROSE
(*Primula acaulis*)

The aboriginal Primrose, at least in European gardening, is this species with pale gold, faintly fragrant flowers that are borne close to the earth in a nest of light green leaves rather like those of young lettuce. Many better "picking" species, and more brilliant colors, have come to replace it, yet it remains the most refined and lovable of them all. Primroses are still grown at Mount Vernon and sold in the streets of Washington by old negroes. But they are really ultra-English flowers, linked by various traditions to the names of Shakespeare, Milton, Darwin, Wordsworth and Disraeli.

European perennial, Primrose family, Spring.



VALERIAN

(*Valeriana officinalis*)

Valerian or Garden Heliotrope got into the olden garden because of its medicinal roots. The medicine tasted and smelled so bad that grandmother was sure it must be good for you. The odor of the flowers, however, is delicate and spicy. The individual little tubular flowers, white or lavender, are not impressive but the whole head makes a filmy "softener" for bouquets that may return to style, to vary the perpetual Baby's Breath.

European perennial, Valerian family, Summer.



ELECAMPANE

(Inula Helenium)

The puritan Fathers wouldn't have felt safe about their healths in this un-Christian New World, without their "Enula Campana." The flowers with 40 or more long slender yellow rays, are really very handsome, almost like sunflowers. The carrot-like roots yield the medicine which is still known to prescription chemists. *Inula bubonium* and *Inula dysenterica* were also grown, as supposed specifics against plague and dysentery.

European perennials, Daisy family, Summer-Autumn.



TANSY

(*Tanacetum vulgare*)

The greatest charm of Tansy is its feathery dark foliage. The rayless sultry flowers are scarcely attractive, and the odor of the plant is rank and irritating. Tansy was an old ladies' bitter-tasting tonic and Tansy leaves were put into Puritan's Easter cakes (to take the joy out of them, mayhap). Some doctors consider the plant rank poison. Tansy is still grown in country gardens, and is escaped in the Atlantic states, especially around Boston.

European perennial, Daisy family, Autumn.



CHAMOMILE
(*Anthemis nobilis*)

Chamomile tea was taken in the days of Washington by the best of men. Even today the worst of doctors may prescribe it. It is also used as a hair rinse, but in the garden we seldom see its white rays, which are short but pleasing. The fragrant foliage is really very dainty. Golden Marguerite (*Anthemis tinctoria*), with yellow rays, is not genuine Chamomile, and its aroma is too pungent.

European perennials, Daisy family, Summer.



FEVERFEW

(*Chrysanthemum Parthenium*)

“Feather-fewe” is mentioned as a New England garden plant so early that it must have arrived with the founders of Boston. Its growth is bushy, 3–4 feet tall. No cure for fevers, it was grown apparently for its feathery leaves. A variety with yellow foliage is still used as a bedding plant under the name of Golden Feather. Costmary (*Pyrethrum Balsamita*) was also grown for its aromatic leaves.

Eurasian perennials, Daisy family, Summer.

THE ILLUSTRATIONS

The frontispiece of this leaflet is from an old illustration in *Flore des Serres*, 1847. The photographs of Crown Imperial, Grape Hyacinth, Jonquil, Sweet William, Clove Pink, London Pride, Monk's Hood, Bleeding Heart, Hen and Chickens, Dittany, Primrose and Elecampane were loaned by Wayside Gardens, Mentor, Ohio; Tiger Lily and Valerian by A. B. Morse Company, St. Joseph, Michigan; Wallflower by Vaughan's Seed Store, Chicago. Job's Tears is from a United States Department of Agriculture publication. All other photographs were made by Hermann Lusche in gardens about Chicago.

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