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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

SATURDAY, May 13, 1939.

(For Broadcast Use Only)

SUBJECT: "WILD FLOWERS AND WILD FLOWER GARDENS." Information from the Bureau of Plant Industry, U.S.D.A.

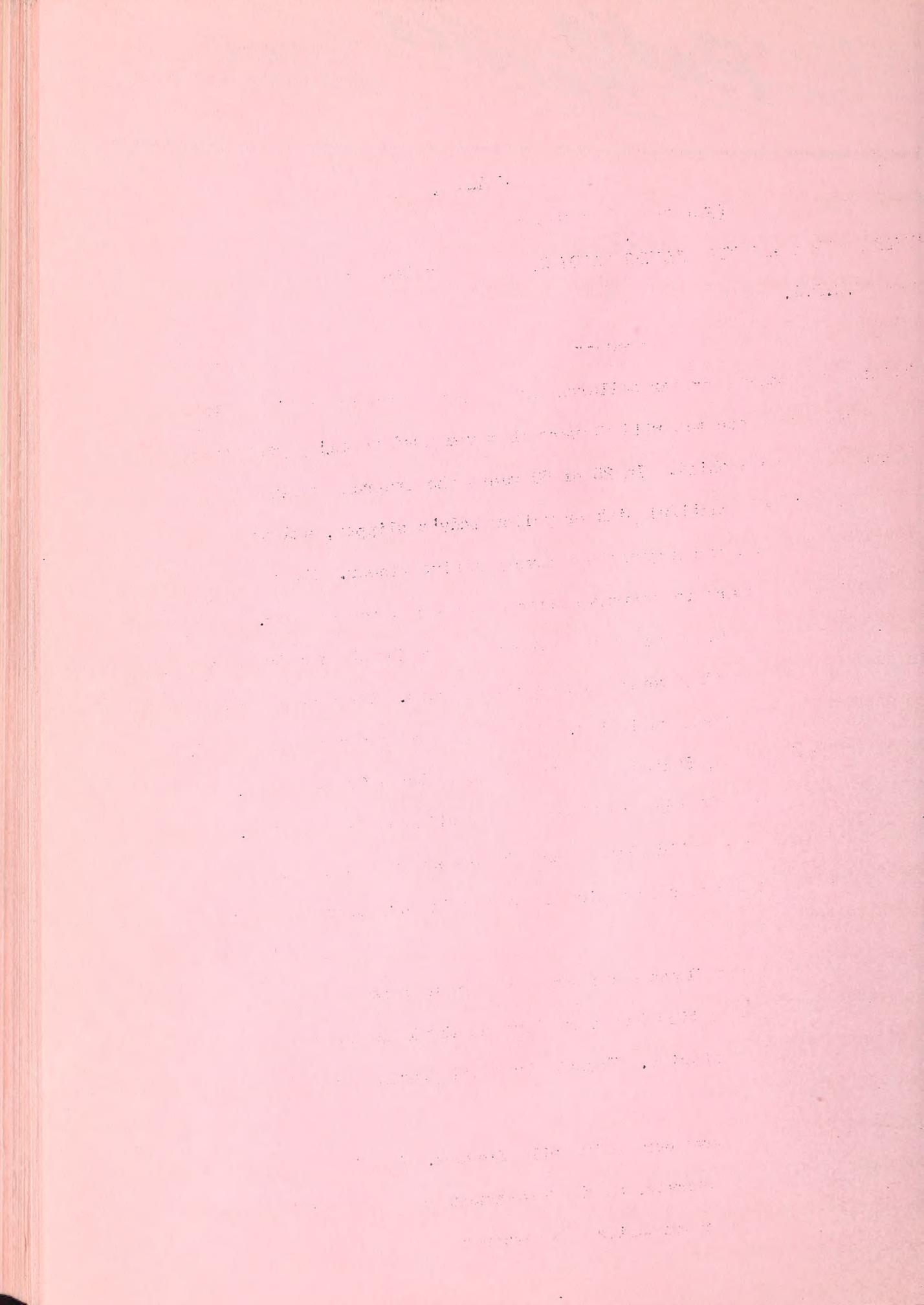
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The children of tomorrow--your children and grandchildren and their children and grandchildren may never see the wild flowers that you used to enjoy gathering in the spring when you were a child. In 25 or 50 years the fragrant spring arbutus may be gone, and the beautiful pink or yellow lady's slipper, and the delicate blue fringed gentian, and many another lovely native flower. Many of our most beautiful native flowers are in serious danger of disappearing forever.

Of course, flower enthusiasts and garden clubs have realized this for years and have been trying to do what they could to save the flowers. They have backed State laws against picking the rarer varieties. But these laws haven't been enough to help much. In the first place, States have not provided for enforcing them. Few people know such laws exist and many would pay no attention to them anyway. And then the courts have held that wild flowers are the property of the owner of the land. You can't prevent the owner from picking or digging or destroying his property, as he pleases.

Anyway, the people who pick flowers are not the biggest cause of their disappearance. The greatest destruction has come about as the land has been cleared for homes and farms and factories. Forest fires and grazing are other big causes.

So only 2 ways are left to save our native wild flowers. One is to establish wild flower refuges or preserves, as the Government has done for forests and birds and game. The other is for nurseries and gardeners to cultivate more



wild flowers and use them more in parks as well as home gardens. The land which has already been set aside for National or State or community forests and parks and for wild life preserves could also very easily serve as wild flower preserves. If the flowers are not to be lost forever, patriotic citizens need to join forces to save them for the citizens of the future. When some tract of land where these flowers are now thriving is to be cleared or flooded for use in agriculture or some other development, nurserymen and everyone else interested in conservation should get permission to have the plants moved to parks or home gardens. And the transplanting should be done by someone who knows how.

You can't just dig up a plant and set it out in your dooryard and expect it to grow. Plants that are used to shady woodlands won't live long in a sunny spot. Those which are adapted to well drained hillsides, say, or damp meadows, or mountain summits won't survive in conditions that are very different from these. Then the character of the soil makes a great difference to them. If your soil is alkaline or limoy and you set out arbutus or mountain laurel, used to acid soil, you won't have these plants long. On the other hand, if you bring plants from alkaline regions to soil which contains a good deal of tannic acid, these plants won't succeed. To make your wild flowers well and happy in a new home, you must set them where they have much the same conditions as in their old home.

The safest time to move native trees and shrubs is when the flowering and fruiting period is over...usually from late October to early March. But as the foliage of many wild flowers disappears soon after fruiting, you have to move them while you can see them, or mark them with a stake for later moving. If you expose the roots long to drying air and heat, they are sure to die. So take up plenty of earth along with the plant. A ball of moist earth or wet moss helps keep them. But make the transplanting as rapidly as possible. And be sure you give them moisture as you set them out.

If you want to grow acid-loving plants on your property, dig into the soil plenty of dead rotting oak leaves or the fallen needles from pine or hemlock or spruce trees. Or work in cottonseed meal which you can buy at any garden supply store. You can also treat the soil with a small amount of aluminum sulphate. This is very strong so use it cautiously or it may do the plants more harm than good. You can keep the soil acid after planting by using more of these acid substances from time to time as top dressing.

On the other hand, if you are moving plants from alkaline or limey soil, ⁱⁿ dig/slaked lime or crushed limestone, if your soil is not alkaline enough.

Another point to consider is whether the soil is sandy or porous, heavy and claylike, or full of leafmold or other rotted vegetable matter. Many of our fine native plants are very particular on such matters. They are also particular about the moisture in the soil. Generally, if your ground is high and dry, it's a good idea to choose plants that like such situations. Or if it is low and moist, transplant those that have been growing in low moist lands.

The fame of many of our wild flowers has traveled around the world. For more than a century gardeners from other countries have taken back our wild flowers and given them an honored place in their gardens. Let's not lose these beautiful free gifts of nature which were here long before Columbus reached these shores.

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