

Board of Aldermen Jan'y 19. 1857  
New York City, N.Y.

QK 129

V5

Botany.

by Egbert Suedewickus Vele,  
of Central Park

The botanical distribution of plants over the surface of the earth undergoes certain modifications connected with the dryness and moisture, as well as the mechanical and chemical composition of the soil. Hence an intimate relation exists between the botany of any district of country and its geology and topography; and, therefore, independently of the climate, certain plants, whether placed by nature or art, will flourish, or decay, according as the temperature and composition of the soil, is favorable or unfavorable to their growth. A botanical survey of the park has been made, for the purpose of ascertaining the nature of the existing vegetation, to learn how far it could be made available in the projected improvements, as well as to know its character, as an indication of what peculiar class of plants would prove most flourishing if transplanted to this ground, as also to discover what alterations the soil would require in order to admit of an increased variety.

This forms the basis of a botanical index which can always be made complete by a careful register of the plants and trees introduced. The investigation has not extended through all the seasons, which, in their turn, develop their peculiar plants; and is, therefore, in some respects, incomplete; still, so far as the useful trees and shrubs are concerned, it is believed that none have been overlooked.

Although this investigation has added nothing new to botanical science, yet it is necessary that the existing trees and plants should be described so as to be identified, and their importance properly estimated. A familiar description has been preferred to strictly botanical language, to convey all that is necessary with regard to the present vegetation. The catalogue will be added to during the ensuing season.

For present purposes, the plants are arranged simply in alphabetical order, without reference to any particular classification.

1st. *AGER DASYCARPUM*—*Silver-leaved Maple.*

A tree, thirty to fifty feet high, and often one to two feet in diameter, with wide, spreading branches. The wood white and soft, sap less sweet than that of the Sugar Maple. Leaves in large petioles, lobed beyond the middle, nearly smooth when old. Flowers, greenish, yellowish or purplish, usually about five together. This forms a beautiful shade tree. The silvery-white of the under surface of the leaves strongly contrasting with the bright green of the upper side, especially when they are agitated by the wind. Found in all portions of the park. About nine thousand specimens. Thrives best in a deep, rich loam, or in a gravelly loam, contiguous to moisture.

2d. *ALNUS SERRULATA*—*Common Alder.*

A shrub, six to twelve feet high, irregularly branched, and usually growing in dense thickets. Leaves from two to five inches long, prominently varied, smooth above; paler, and sprinkled with resinous dots underneath. About twelve thousand specimens. Grows in swampy ground. Flowers in March or April.

3d. ANDROMEDA PANICULATA—*Privet Andromeda.*

A shrub, four to eight feet high, much branched, and with a grayish bark. Leaves from one and one half to two inches long, variable in breadth, nearly smooth above; pale, and more or less pubescent underneath. About two thousand five hundred specimens. Grows in swamps and moist thickets. Flowers in June and July.

4th. AZALEA VISCOSA—*White Wild . oney-suckle.*

A shrub, four to seven feet high, with numerous spreading branches, and a grayish bark. Leaves one to two inches long. About six hundred specimens. Grows in moist places, and in woods. Flowers in June and July, sometimes as late as August.

5th. BETULA NIGRA—*Red Birch.*

A tree forty to seventy feet high, and from one to two feet in diameter, with long, slender and pendulous branches. Leaves about three inches long and two wide. Generally distributed. About one thousand specimens. Grows in low grounds. Flowers in April.

6th. BROUSSONETIA—*Paper Mulberry.*

Native of Japan. Found in the neighborhood of residences. Grows from forty to fifty feet high. Leaves large and downy. Will grow in very dry situations, where few other things will. About five hundred specimens.

7th. CARPINUS AMERICANA—*Water Beech.*

A tree, fifteen to twenty feet high; the bark smooth and light gray. Leaves about three inches long, gene-

rally distributed. About five thousand specimens. Flowers in April. Will grow in a poor soil. Is a very handsome, small tree, the leaves changing in the autumn to various shades of crimson, scarlet and orange, and very often retained on the plant during the winter.

8th. *CASTANEA AMERICANA*—*Chestnut*.

A tall tree, sometimes sixty to eighty feet high, and three to four feet in diameter. Leaves six to eight inches long, and about two inches wide. Will thrive in the most barren soils, especially those of a rocky or gravelly nature. Generally distributed. Five hundred specimens. Flowers in June.

9th. *CATALPA SYRINGEFOLIA*—*Catalpa*.

A tree, twenty to thirty feet high. Leaves from five to eight inches in diameter. Flowers in June, and at that time very ornamental. Found in the neighborhood of several residences. Introduced from the South. About fifty specimens. Will grow in any soil.

10th. *CELASTRUS SCANDENS*—*Bitter-sweet*.

A climbing plant, winds around shrubs and small trees, or along stone fences, ten to twenty feet long. Leaves two to three inches long. Flowers early in June. Found in the thickets in the upper portion of the park.

11th. *CELTIS OCCIDENTALIS*—*Sugar Berry*.

A small tree, from fifteen to thirty feet high, and six or eight inches in diameter, with numerous slender spreading branches. Leaves two to three inches long and one to two inches wide, dark green. Flowers in May. Found in a number of situations.

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY  
LIBRARY.



Edg. Mayer & Co. N.Y.

View from Mount Prospect [Central Park] looking East

Drawn from Nature by Aug. Ribstein



12th. CLEMATIS VIRGINIANA—*Virgin's Bower.*

Stem eight to fifteen inches long, climbing over shrubs and bushes. Found in thick, shady and moist places. Flowers in July and August. About two hundred specimens.

13th. CLETHRA ALNIFOLIA—*Sweet Pepper-bush.*

A shrub, four to eight feet high, with brownish bark and erect branches. Flowers at the end of July and August; white flower, very fragrant. Generally distributed. About one thousand five hundred specimens.

14th. CORNUS ALBA—*White Varied Dog-wood.*

A small tree or shrub, fifteen to twenty feet high. Leaves three to four inches long, and two to three inches wide. Flowers in May and June. Large trusses of white flowers, succeeded by white berries. Branches turn to a fine red color in winter. Grows in moist places. Generally distributed. About one thousand five hundred specimens.

15th. CORNUS FLORIDA—*American Dog-wood.*

One of the most beautiful of our native, flowering small trees. The flowers appearing in April, and presenting a brilliant appearance. Thrives best in moist ground. Grows, sometimes, to thirty feet in height. Generally distributed. About three thousand specimens.

16th. CORYLUS AMERICANA—*Wild Filbert.*

A shrub, four to six feet high. Leaves three to five inches long; slender branches. Flowers in April. Found generally distributed in thickets. About six thousand specimens.

17th. DIOSPYRUS VIRGINIANA--*Persimmon.*

In good soil, this tree will frequently grow forty or fifty feet high, and in its habits of growth is one of the most picturesque middle sized trees we have. When by itself it grows conically; it is interesting at all seasons. In spring, by its deep, shining green foliage; in summer, by the light green fruit; in the fall, by the rich orange of its leaves, and the deep brown of its fruit. It thrives best in a deep, rich loam. Found in one locality. About five hundred specimens.

18th. FAGUS FERRUGINEA--*Beech.*

A beautiful tree, often fifty or sixty feet high, and two feet or more in diameter. The trunk clothed with a thick, smooth gray bark. Leaves four or five inches long. Grows to perfection in a deep, rich loam. Flowers in May. Found in several localities. About two thousand specimens.

19th. FRAXINUS AMERICANA--*White Ash.*

A tall tree, forty to sixty feet high, and one to two feet in diameter. Light, gray bark, generally furrowed with transverse cracks. One of our prettiest trees. Its light hue gives a beautiful effect when combined with darker foliage. Requires a rich loam and plenty of space to arrive at perfection. Flowers in April and May. Found but a few specimens, about one hundred in all.

20th. GLEDITSCHIA TRIACANTHUS--*Honey Locust.*

A middle-sized tree. Leaves six to ten inches in length; not a native of this state, but often planted about houses, for ornament and hedges. Found in the neighborhood of

private residences. About one hundred specimens. Flowers in July.

21st. HAMAMELIS VIRGINIANA—*Witch Hazel*.

A shrub, six to twelve feet high. Leaves three to six inches. When cultivated, becomes a handsome small tree. It seems to thrive well in any situation. Flowers at the end of October. Found generally distributed. About one thousand five hundred specimens.

22d. JUGLANS NIGRA—*Black Walnut*.

A tree, thirty to sixty feet high, with a trunk from one to two feet in diameter. Leaves a foot or more in length. Thrives best in a cool, deep and rich loam. Flowers in May. Found generally distributed. About two thousand specimens. Besides this, the "*Juglans cinerea*," or white walnut, also found.

23d. JUNIPERUS VIRGINIANA—*Red Cedar*.

A well known and useful evergreen, often growing thirty or forty feet high. Grows on dry hillsides, in rocky sterile soil. But a few specimens are found.

24th. LAURUS BENZOIN—*Wild Allspice*.

A shrub six to ten feet high. Leaves three to five feet long. Grows in low, moist ground, on the borders of rivers. Flowers in April. Found in a few places. About two hundred and fifty specimens.

25th. LAURUS SASSAFRAS—*Sassafras*.

A middle-sized tree; trunk rarely one foot in diameter: the most interesting tree in the landscape. Toward autumn the leaves turn to a reddish brown. Thrives

well in a dry, sandy loam; poor in a wet situation. Found very generally distributed. About twenty thousand specimens.

26th. LIQUIDAMBAR SYRACIFLUA—*Sweet Gum*.

Grows from fifty to sixty feet high, under favorable circumstances. Thrives in a deep, rich loam. Found generally distributed. About six thousand specimens.

27th. LIRIODENDRON TULIPIFERA—*Tulip tree*.

From forty to eighty feet high; from one to three feet in diameter. Trunk perfectly straight, and of nearly uniform diameter. Flowers in June. Thrives well in a strong, clayey or micaceous soil. Found in a number of localities. About five hundred specimens.

28th. MYRICA CERIFERA—*Bay-berry*.

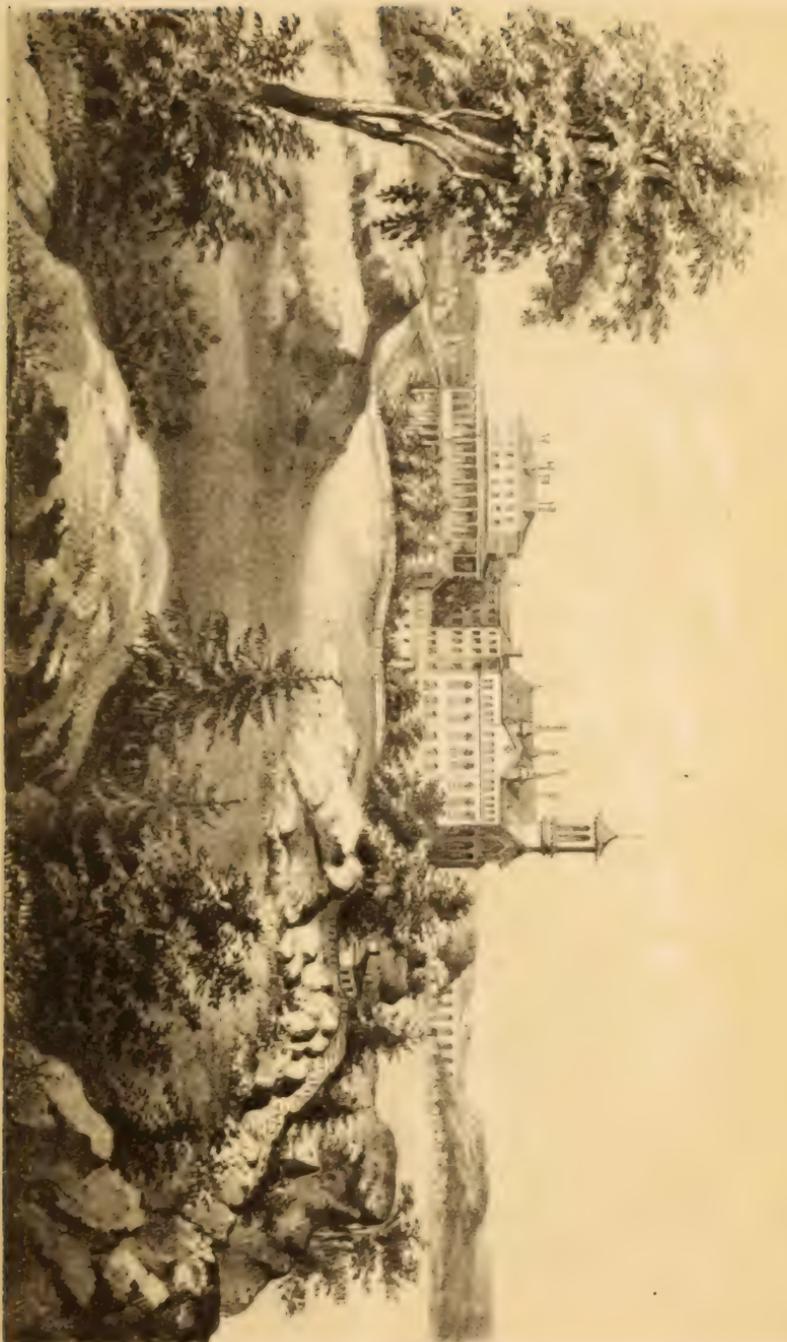
A shrub, three to eight feet high, much branched at the summit. Leaves two to four inches long, and from one half to nearly an inch wide. Grows in dry soils, in thickets. Flowers in May. About six thousand specimens.

29th. PLATANUS OCCIDENTALIS—*Button-wood, Sycamore*.

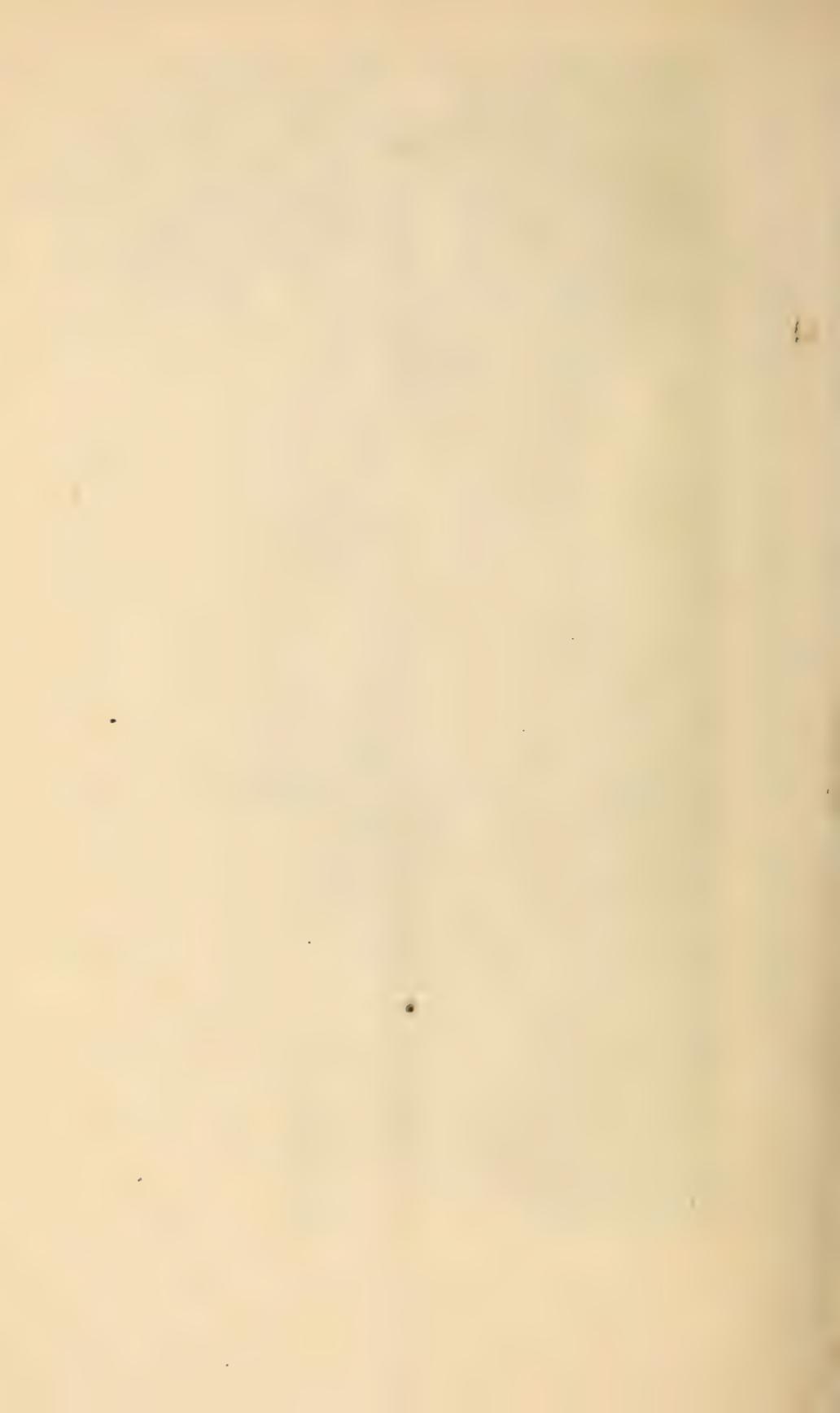
A very large tree, often sixty or eighty feet high, and two to five feet, or more, in diameter, with thick spreading branches. Will do well in any situation, but thrives best in moist soil. Found in a number of localities. About three thousand specimens.

30th. POPULUS BALSAMIFERA—*Balsam Poplar*.

A tree thirty to eighty feet high, and one to two feet in diameter. Leaves about three inches long. Prefers a deep, moist and rich soil. About fifty specimens found. Probably not a native.



View from Bellevue Rock [Central Park] looking North  
corner of the Park



31st. *POPULUS ARGENTEA*—*Cotton tree.*

A tree forty to sixty feet high, and from one to two feet in diameter. Leaves three to six inches long. Grows in moist ground. About fifty specimens found.

32d. *POPULUS TREMULOIDES*—*American Aspen.*

A tree twenty to thirty feet high, and from six to ten inches in diameter. Leaves about two inches long, breadth usually greater than the length. Flowers in May and April. Prefers a moist soil. About one hundred specimens found.

33d. *PRUNUS VIRGINIANA*—*Choke Cherry.*

A shrub or small tree. Leaves two to four inches long. Grows on rocky hillsides. Found everywhere in the brushwood. About two thousand specimens.

34th. *QUERCUS MACROCARPA*—*Over-cup. White Oak.*

Trunk forty to sixty feet high. Bark of the branches somewhat corky in ridges. Leaves six to twelve inches or more in length. About fifteen hundred specimens.

35th. *QUERCUS RUBRA*—*Red Oak.*

Grows from fifty to eighty feet high, and from two to four feet in diameter. Leaves six to nine inches long and three to five inches wide. Flowers in May. Grows well in a poor soil. About two thousand specimens found.

36th. *QUERCUS PALUSTRIS*—*Pin Oak.*

A pretty conical shaped tree, with leaves of a light green. The lower branches often pendulous, sweeping the ground, and forming a pleasant shade.

37th. ROBINIA PSEUDACACIA—*Common Locust tree.*

A tree forty or fifty feet high, occasionally reaches the height of ninety feet, not indigenous in any part of the state, but almost naturalized in many places. A very valuable tree on account of its wood. Found in compact growth. About three thousand specimens.

38th. ALNUS AMERICANA—*American Elm.*

A large tree, sometimes eighty or more feet high and two to four feet in diameter. Leaves three to five inches long. Flowers in April. Thrives only in light, rich loam. Generally distributed. About six thousand specimens.

39th. VIBURNUM ACERIFOLIUM—*Maple-leaved Arrow wood.*

A shrub three to five feet high, with smooth, straight and slender branches. Leaves three to five inches in diameter. Flowers in June. Found very generally distributed. About five thousand specimens.

40th. VIBURNUM PAUCIFLORUM—*Mountain bush Cranberry.*

A shrub two to four feet high, found in great abundance.

41st. VITIS LABRUSCA—*Fox Grape.*

Stem very long, straggling over bushes or shrubs or climbing the highest trees. Sometimes six or eight inches in diameter. Common in woods and swamps. Two thousand specimens found.

42d. VITIS QUINQUEFOLIA—*American Ivy.*

A vine of rapid growth, climbing trees and other objects, and spreading extensively—presenting a very beautiful and striking appearance in the autumn from its

curious foliage. Flowers in July. About five hundred specimens found.

The remainder of the plants that have been found are either injurious or so few in number as to render any reference to them in this connection unimportant. The total number of species found is seventy, of which there are in all about one hundred and fifty thousand specimens.



## The Plan.

The art of ornamenting and preparing ground for purposes of pleasure, has undergone many changes since it first became a study, and within the past century has been marked by a most rapid progression. The earlier efforts were characterized by a desire to make nature assume a strictly artificial appearance, giving to every scene an air of formality and symmetry, a seeming attempt to apply the rules of architecture to landscape, under the impression, that the greatest effect was thereby produced. Later years have developed a clearer conception of the true nature of taste, and has given rise to a modern style, which is based upon the maxim, that "the greatest art is to conceal art."

These two styles, "the natural" and "the artificial," modified in different countries by national characteristics, and the peculiarities of climate, have originated the various schools of art, such as the Italian, the Dutch, the French, and the English, which have been followed, to a greater or less extent by all those who have had any pretension as professors in this particular field. In England, under the auspices of landed wealth and a liberal government, and through the studies of Kent, Repton and Loudon, improving upon the efforts and profiting by the errors of two centuries, it has reached a high degree of perfection; in Germany, by the energy and genius of Puckler Muskau, it has changed the neglected suburbs of ancient cities into