



MRS. GILBERT S. GOVE and Mrs. Walter G. Patton look over a space helmet to be used in the AAUW Children's Theater production this fall. Mrs. Patton wrote the play, "Space Happy", which takes place on Mars. She will assist Mrs. Gove in directing the play.

NATURE NOW

Wild Cherry Source Of Food, Beauty Down Country Lanes

By LYDIA KING FREHSE
Special Writer for The Birmingham Eccentric

Summer is brief and comes late to the northwoods country. Now in early August monarch butterflies are feasting on the heavy-headed milkweed blossoms, and cow vetch covers the meadows with a blanket of rich purple.

An old lane leads up the hill to the deserted farm site—remnant of a home-steadier's dream. Wild cherries redden the fence rows and a narrow strip of yellowed timothy grows tall between the wheel tracks.

A white pine stands guard at the fallen gate and a clump of moss roses still blooms in the tangled grass that marks the site of the old garden. On the hillside gnarled apple trees have out-lived the hand which planted them.

The heat waves shimmer in the distance and always the field sparrow calls, his voice drifting off into nothingness.

The pin cherry trees fan out from the lane over the hill side, their fruits glistening in the late morning sun. Flocks of cedar waxwings weave in and out as they feast in the tree tops. So popular is this wild cherry with the birds that it is often called the "bird" cherry and so addicted is the cedar waxing to its fruit that he is often called the "cherry" bird.

OF THE wild cherry tribe, there are three varieties which attain tree size—the black cherry, choke cherry and pin cherry. Our cultivated species were introduced from Europe.

The black cherry is common in the rich moist lands of the southern part of the lower peninsula. It is the most valuable of the three varieties both from the standpoint of its fruit and the quality of its wood.

Two black cherry trees served as landmarks on my grandfather's farm. When my grandmother was hard pressed she made a pie of their fruits. A jug of homemade wild cherry wine stood in the pioneer's cellar to welcome the special guest, and today the bark of wild cherry is still used in tonics and cough medicines.

The black cherry reaches a height of 60 feet and a diameter of three feet. In pioneer America it furnished such a wealth of wood that it was used not only in making fine furniture as it is today, but the interior of many a house was finished with its rich color and texture.

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of North America. Its name comes from its pucker fruit which, like the black cherry, grows in a long loose raceme.

An early American colonist, writing in the "New England Prospect," describes its cherries thus: "... they so furr the mouth that the tongue will cleave to the roof and the throat wax horse ... English ordering may bring them to be an English Cherrie, but as yet they are as wild as the Indians."

But it is the pin cherry which covers my hilltop. Like the choke cherry its fruit is unpalatable. It is a fast growing and short-lived tree seldom growing more than 30 feet tall. It takes its name from its fruit stems which are the length of a pin.

THESE grow in clusters instead of racemes as do the choke and black cherry fruits. Ornithologists report that 23 kinds of birds eat this cherry. This variety is also called "fire" cherry because it springs up after a fire in company with aspen and birch. Later it acts as a nurse tree to furnish shade for more valuable seedlings. Both the choke and the pin cherry are used in soil erosion control and for ground cover in game management.

Now the sound of a resort bell punctuates the noonday stillness but before I leave I must reclaim a handful of the late moss roses hidden in their tangle of grass. Perhaps they kept alive treasured memories of other gardens for one who planted them, even as they do for me.

Their fragrance and their moss-covered buds are like that of no other rose. They are so reminiscent of my grandmother's garden that I scarcely feel the sharp thorns that prick my hands as I go down the hill, following the rows of reddening cherry trees.



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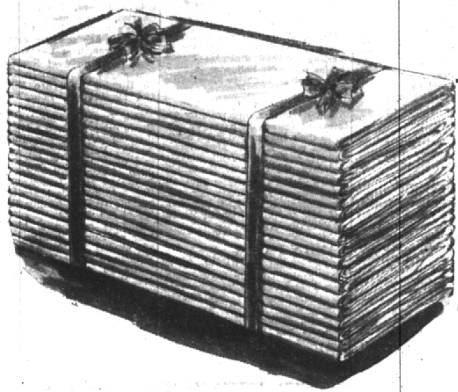
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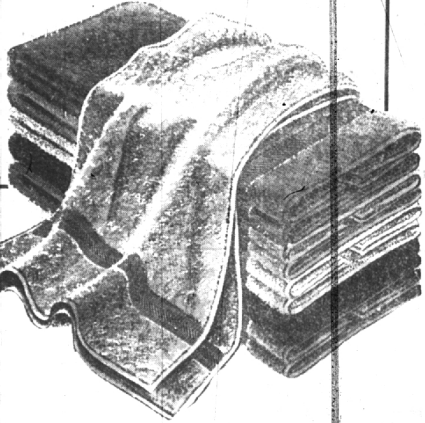
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