

THE ENGAGEMENT of Stephanie DeGroot to Thomas W. Reardon has been announced by her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Edward P. DeGroot of Birmingham. Thomas is the son of Mrs. Thomas G. Reardon of Berkeley and the late Mr. Reardon. A fall wedding is being planned.



NATURE NOW

Nature Pitfalls You Should Try to Avoid

By LYDIA KING FREHSE
Special Writer for The Birmingham Eclectic

On June 21, at 5.55 p.m. our sun will reach its most northern point, thereby officially ushering in the "good old summer time."

Perhaps no other single month brings such a combination of satisfactions and joys. Beside the stirring music of Mendelssohn and Elgar with their attendant ceremonies, we have in the offering all the promise and adventure of a summer full of days out-of-doors.

However, he who thinks of nature's hand in any season as a wholly beneficent one, is sure to be disillusioned. Behind its beauty, its adventure and its healing ways, there lurk some enemies.

For to be said once more that, while every living thing is a predator, it is at the same time being preyed upon. If the hapless rabbit is eaten by the fox, he in turn has wandered into the forbidden confines of "McGregor's cabbage patch."

This law applies to the least and to the greatest of each of nature's creations and by it is the complicated pattern of life held in a equitable balance. Hidden within the lushness of life is the cruel fang, the poisonous sting, the irritating plant and the deadly fungus.

HERE FOLLOW some notes on a few enemies which are likely to be encountered by those whose feet wander off the beaten path.

Perhaps the most frequent disturbers of vacation plans are poison ivy (Rhus radicata) and poison sumac (Rhus vernix). Poison ivy is generally dispersed in fields, roadsides and woods. It varies in form from a spreading ground cover plant to a low vine or a climber which by means of its aerial rootlets may reach as high as the tree-tops. Its alternate branches are decorated with coarsely-toothed leaves growing in threes; its small grape-like clusters of whitish berries appear at the axis of leaf and stem.

Poison sumac hugs the borders of ponds and streams and thrives in swampy thickets. Its smooth grey bark and smooth whitish axillary berry cluster, will serve to distinguish it from the harmless sumacs which have velvety dark red berries born in a terminal cluster. This is our most poisonous shrub.

BOTH THESE plants are skin irritants at any season and contact with any part of the plant, including the beaten path, will serve to distinguish it from the harmless sumacs which have velvety dark red berries born in a terminal cluster. This is our most poisonous shrub.

The irritating principal of both is a slightly volatile substance called, "Urushiol." A thorough lathering with yellow laundry soap after suspected exposure is an effective preventative if used at once. Consult a plant manual for more detailed description plus pictures of these enemies which should enable you to recognize them at sight.

In our state more people die from mushroom poisoning than from any other plant enemy.

Most dangerous of these innocent-looking fungi which spread their spawning fertility over fields and woods, is the genus "Amanita." Two species generally classed as "phalloides" and "muscaria" are both deadly.

AMANITA phalloides is now generally considered as a European species. Dr. Smith, Ann Arbor mycologist, names several distinct American forms of this species, varying in color from pure white through shades of grey and brown.

Of these the deadly Amanita verna (called the "destroying angel") is most distinctive with its pure white stem, cap and gills. It is most often seen under the saps and birch trees and very abundant from July to October. This mushroom is particularly dangerous because to the uninitiated, it closely resembles the edible meadow mushroom (Agaricus campestris).

However, all the Amanitas have white gills and a white spore deposit while the Agaricus family are at first pale pink gilled turning later to rose and brown, with a chocolate brown spore deposit.

Another distinctive and deadly mushroom is Amanita muscaria the "fly" Amanita, so called because flies often lie dead on its large yellow cap which is covered with white warty scales.

It is most abundant in late summer in the shade of conifer trees where it has often seen growing

with a cap as large as a small plate.

THE WARNING mark on all Amanitas is the "death cap," the mushroom is broken off in a cup at the base of the stem. If the mushroom is broken off this cup often remains concealed within the earth.

There is no single rule to identify a poisonous fungus. By patient study the student learns the characteristics of each single species, but, there is one infallible rule to avoid mushroom poisoning. Do not eat any species except puff balls or morels unless you are an experienced mycologist. This rule cannot be over-emphasized.

In spite of the fact that many people collect handfuls of mushrooms "by sight" and live, it is equally true that no season passes without a goodly number of deaths from mushroom poisoning.

A number of other species are poisonous but not necessarily deadly, and some are very nauseous or even deadly to one individual whereas another eating of the same dish may not be affected.

THE BLACK widow spider is another public enemy. It is the most seriously venomous spider native to North America. Although death results in only five per cent of the known cases, its bite results in severe pain. The venom although small in quantity, is described as 15 times as potent as that of the rattlesnake.

The black widow is so named because after a prolonged courtship she eats her mate. This species is rare in Michigan but is generally abundant in the southern states. The female is a shiny coal black creature, eight-legged, slender-waisted with an abdomen about half an inch long. The identifying mark is a bright red "hour-glass" on the under side of the abdomen.

THE MALE is striped and patterned and is harmless. During the summer months the black widow may be found in basements, outbuildings, hollow stumps, rodent holes and among trash and dense vegetation. If its presence is suspected this spider may be eradicated by a suitable spray such as DDT.

Of the danger of the massasauga rattler I have already written in the column dated June 3. Add this poisonous snake to your list of enemies if you are getting "all set" for a vacation in Michigan.

"Be informed" and thereby "be safe" while you enjoy the out-of-doors.

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