

Many-Flowered Composites Color Roadsides in Autumn

Now as autumn approaches, our many-flowered composites shake their dusty heads in every waste meadow and along every wayside ditch.

For their kind, with their abundant and efficient flower clusters, occupy the pinnacle of floral evolution.

Some patient botanist once began counting the florets borne by a single plant of goldenrod only to

stop in confusion when he had passed the 50,000 mark.

One bee mulling over a composite cluster can pollinate each of its several hundred florets, and the story of the clever dispersal habits of its encased seeds is carried by every autumn wind.

BY FAR the greatest number of our autumn flowers are included in

the composite group. Aster, goldenrod, sunflower, chickory, thistle, and old enemy called ragweed are familiar to all.

This family is also well-represented in our summer and autumn gardens with such favorites as daisy, coreopsis, zinnia, marigold, cosmos, chrysanthemum and dahlias.

THE OLD HERB named tansy might be called one of our less abundant composites. However, on one of our last summer trips in Emmet County, northeast of Harbor Springs, we saw quantities of it growing along railroad tracks and lanes and around abandoned farm houses.

Your scribe has not lately noted it, and with regret, as a medicinal herb. It was therefore given space in the central lower peninsula and around old haunts along the Au Sable river.

Wherever you do see this plant, you know it originally escaped from gardens, for tansy came to America from England where it was prized as a medicinal herb. It was therefore given space in every garden.

GERARD, one of the earliest of quaint English herbalists, wrote, "In the springtime are made with the leaves thereof and newly sprung up, and with eggs, cakes of tannic which be pleasant in taste and good for the Stomach."

Samuel Pepps, English diarist of the 17th century, used this herb in the menu for a dinner party.

The bill of fare included, "A brace of stewed carps, six roasted chickens and a jewel of salmon, hot, for the first course; a tansy and two neat's tongues and cheese (for the second)."

In 1856 an Englishman named Cole wrote a book called "The Art of Simpling." In it he assured maidens that tansy leaves laid to soak in buttermilk for nine days "maketh the complexion very fair."

ALTHOUGH the above were an interesting but often misinformed and superstitious lot, their writings show how much faith they had in the tansy plant as a cure-all.

It was a faith which they passed on to future generations down to our early colonists who gave it an honored place in their gardens.

This strong-scented and pungent plant topped with bright yellow button-like flowers was still cultivated and revered in by grandmother's generation.

Today it has lost its reputation as a cure-all, but it is still a stunning plant growing as much as three feet tall, its deep green leaves deeply and pinnately cleft into narrow, toothed divisions.

The flowers are abundantly born in flat-topped clusters without the conspicuous ray flowers found among their relatives.

IF YOU PULL one of the aromatic blooms to pieces, you will find two kinds of small tubular flowers, each having a seed vessel at its base where it is attached to a round disk.

The central florets have both pistils and stamens, and their tubes are notched at the top while the marginal ones are pistillate with a small strap-like petal at one side.

Tansy leaves are covered with dotted oil glands which give the plant its strongly aromatic flavor and scent. Although it has no conspicuous petals to accommodate insect pollinators, it seeds abundantly.

An average plant has as many as 40 flower heads, each one containing some 400 florets making a total of 16,000 tiny blooms.

Cultural Events

Sept. 5
KENLWORTH ART GALLERIES—Opening of exhibition of oil paintings by Michigan artist Domingo Baglimbene, through Sept. 14. Gallery hours are 105 Pierce St., Mon. through Wed. from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and 9 to 9 p.m. Thursday through Sat. from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.

BLOOMFIELD THEATER—"Summer Magic," starring Hayley Mills, Burl Ives and Dorothy McGuire, and "Young Guns of Texas," starring James Mitchum, Jody McCrea and Chill Wills.

BIRMINGHAM THEATER—"The Thrill of It All," starring Doris Day and James Garner, and "That Touch of Mink," starring Doris Day and Cary Grant.

FRANKLIN JUNIOR PLAYERS—The Franklin Junior Players will perform "The Silver Whistle" in a tent on the Franklin Village Green at 8:30 p.m. Admission charge. Open to the public.

CRANBROOK GALLERIES—Annual summer show of work by students of the Cranbrook Academy of Art; will run through mid-September. Also, in the Young People's Art Center Galleries, annual student summer show; will run through mid-September. Gallery hours are 2 to 5 p.m. daily except Mondays and major holidays. Admission charge.

INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE—Exhibit of Pre-Historic Mexican civilization and Pre-Columbian architecture at the Cranbrook Institute of Science. Hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday and 2 to 5 p.m. on weekends. Admission charge. The exhibit will continue through Sept. 8.

JACOBSON'S—Three-man show of primitive oil paintings by Margaret Neiman, Frederick Pasadoroff and Elizabeth Thompson at Fine Arts in Jacobsons (home decorating store), Birmingham. The show will run through Sat., Sept. 14. Gallery hours are 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday through Saturday and 9:30 a.m. to 9 p.m. Thursday.

BRIDGE—Birmingham Duplicate at the YMCA, 400 E. Lincoln, Birmingham, beginning at 7:45 p.m. Open to the public.

Sept. 6
RAVEN GALLERY—"The Topiders" will entertain at the Raven Gallery, 136 Brownell, Birmingham, beginning at 9 p.m. Admission charge.

FRANKLIN JUNIOR PLAYERS—The Franklin Junior Players will perform "The Bishop's Mantle" in a tent on the Franklin Village Green at 8:30 p.m. Admission charge. Open to the public.

Sept. 7
RAVEN GALLERY—"The Topiders" will entertain at the Raven Gallery, 136 Brownell, Birmingham, beginning at 9 p.m. Admission charge.

FRANKLIN JUNIOR PLAYERS—The Franklin Junior Players will perform "The Silver Whistle" in a tent on the Franklin Village Green at 8:30 p.m. Admission charge. Open to the public.

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RAVEN GALLERY—"The Topiders" will entertain at the Raven Gallery, 136 Brownell, Birmingham, beginning at 9 p.m. Admission charge.

LITTLE GALLERY—Original Master Drawings of Eight Centuries (1270 to 1963), Sept. 8 through Oct. 5. Preview opening Sunday from 3 to 7 p.m. at 215 E. Maple, Birmingham. Open Tuesdays through Saturdays 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

BLOOMFIELD ART ASSOCIATION—Open exhibition of award winners from the Birmingham Arts Festivals 1961-63. Continues through Sept. 29, at 1616 S. Cranbrook Road, Birmingham. Gallery is open daily except Monday from 2 to 5 p.m.

Sept. 9
BRIDGE—The Community House Bridge Club will resume at 7:45 p.m. at The Community House. Open to the public.

Sept. 10
BRIDGE—Tuesday Birmingham Duplicate at the home of Hilda Murphy, 2424 Manchester, Birmingham, beginning at 1 p.m. Open to the public.

Sept. 11
BRIDGE—The Birmingham-Bloomfield Area Bridge Club will meet at the YMCA, 400 E. Lincoln, Birmingham, beginning at 7:45 p.m. Open to the public.

Sept. 12
BRIDGE—The Birmingham Duplicate Bridge Club will meet at the YMCA, 400 E. Lincoln, Birmingham, at 7:45 p.m. Open to the public.

Sept. 14
HOOTENANNY—Saturday night hootenanny at the YMCA, 400 E. Lincoln, Birmingham, beginning at 7:30 p.m. Open to the public.

Sept. 15
CARILLON CONCERT—Recital on the Kirk-in-the-Hills carillon at 4 p.m. The concert, which is open to the public, may be heard from the grounds of the church on W. Long Lake Road in Bloomfield Hills.

Sept. 16
BRIDGE—The Community House Bridge Club at 7:45 p.m. at The Community House. Open to the public.

Sept. 17
BRIDGE—Tuesday Birmingham Duplicate at the home of Hilda Murphy, 2424 Manchester, Birmingham, beginning at 1 p.m. Open to the public.

Sept. 18
BRIDGE—The Birmingham-Bloomfield Area Bridge Club at the YMCA, 400 E. Lincoln, Birmingham, beginning at 7:45 p.m. Open to the public.

Sept. 19
BRIDGE—Birmingham Duplicate at the YMCA, 400 E. Lincoln, Birmingham, beginning at 7:45 p.m. Open to the public.

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