

**THE MINNEAPOLIS WILD BOTANIC GARDEN.**

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On account of the rapid growth of the city—spreading out like a spider's web for miles in all directions—and the consequent disappearance of the wild lands and their indigenous vegetation—making it necessary for students of botany to go farther and farther afield for specimens, it occurred to the writer, some years ago, that means should be taken to establish a plant preserve, within which to maintain representatives of the flora of our state; to serve also as a depot of supplies for the schools; as a resort for the lovers of wild nature; and to afford an opportunity to study botanical problems at first hand.

Accordingly, the teachers of botany in Minneapolis and other interested citizens petitioned the park board to set apart a tract of land for the above named purposes; the teachers were to supervise the garden, the park board were to protect the property and to bear the necessary expenses.



Fig. 1

No site could be more favorable for the aims in view than the one selected. It lies in Glenwood Park, which now comprises about 700 acres, with additions in prospect. The land is of glacial origin and hence abounds in hills, pools and bogs, and has two ponds of fair extent. In autumn, the scene is of surpassing beauty by reason of the lovely groups of trees and the contrasts of color—the vivid reds of the swamp maple and the oaks and the gold of the poplars set off by the white boles of the birch and the dark green foliage of the tamaracks. About seven acres have been given up to the wild garden, which has for its core a tamarack swamp, surrounded by untimbered bog land,



Fig. 2

merging into meadows and wooded slopes. The meadow is threaded by a tiny, tortuous brook, falling through several levels in little, musical cascades. Where it leaves the garden, the brook has been widened by means of a dam into a small pond (Fig. 1) for the harborage of the water lily, nelumbium and other choice aquatics. All the desiderata for plant life are thus provided—abundance of water, protection from cold and drying winds and a rich and varied soil content. A fortunate accident has also furnished a home for sand plants—a quantity of sand, heaped up for the construction of a boulevard having been washed by a storm into a portion of the enclosure.

The tamarack swamp (Fig. 2) is an abiding joy, being the only one within the city limits that has been saved from drainage and devastation for fence posts. Here in the sphagnum the wondrous orchids—the ladies' slippers, and the habernarias—and the strange insectivorous plants—the pitcher plant and the sundew—together with *Linnaea*, mitreworts, coral root, violets, gold thread, marsh marigold, Indian turnip, bunch berry, cinnamon and shield ferns, mosses, fungi and myriads of other bog dwellers, which cannot flourish elsewhere, are free to disport themselves.

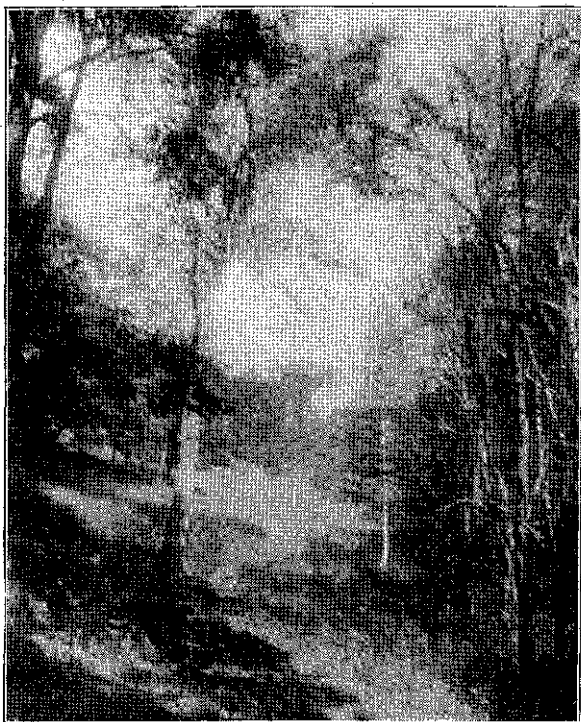


Fig. 3

A paramount idea is to perpetuate in the garden its primeval wildness. All artificial appearances are avoided and plants are to be allowed to grow as they will and without any check except what may be necessary for healthful living. Those in excess may be removed, when others more desirable have been obtained to replace them. Each individual, when procured, is to be given an environment as similar as possible to that from which it came, and then left to take care of itself, as in the wild open, with only the natural fertilizers furnished by decaying vegetation.

Because of the wide variation in conditions (Fig. 3) many plants may be introduced. Stumps and fallen tree trunks are cherished, the former for bird homes and the accommodation of vines, and both for the sustenance of fungi. The place is indeed a paradise for the student of mushrooms, innumerable agarics, geasters, pezizas, boleti, polypori, and huge lycoperdons and lepiotas being found there in their season. The mosses, also, are equally varied and abundant.



Fig. 4

Of the trees in the swamp, the most frequent, after the tamarack, are the white and the yellow birch (Fig. 4), black ash, red maple and aspen; of the shrubs, cornels, viburnums, willows, dwarf birch, poison sumach and black alder; on the uplands, the red, the scarlet and the white oak, the red and the white elm. Conspicuous among them are a large, beautiful white elm and the largest white oak in Minneapolis (Fig. 5). Twenty species of trees and thirty-six of shrubs are indigenous to the garden. The upland shrubs most in evidence are the staghorn sumach, prickly ash, hazel, wild rose, raspberry, blackberry, hawthorns and the vines—wild grape, Virginia creeper and bitter sweet. It

is proposed to utilize the fence surrounding the garden as a support for all the vines of the state.

The meadow, beside the usual grasses and sedges, is rich in *Marchantia*, *Conocephalus*, sundew, grass of Parnassus, tall lobelia, late meadow rue, the Canada lily, the small cranberry, thoroughworts, smilacinas, tufted loosestrife and fringed gentian.

On the treeless portions of the uplands, the prairie plants have



Fig. 5

secured a footing, as golden rods, asters, cone flowers, *Heliopsis* and sunflowers. A large proportion of our shade plants is found in the rich soil of the wooded slopes. Among them, the most notable introduced members are the dicentras, hepaticas, mandrake, rattlesnake plantain, ginseng, twisted stalk and large-flowered trillium. And as but two or three specimens of blood-root and showy orchis were found, their numbers have been largely increased. In the swamp, Indian poke, spring beauty, dogtooth violets, *Clintonia*, cypripediums, twayblades, *Arethusa*, skunk cabbage, calla, phlox, creeping snowberry, *Oxalis Acetosella*, *Dalibarda*, and fringed polygala have taken kindly to adoption. The wayward curves of the brook have been emphasized

by plantings of cardinal flower, forget-me-not and *Coreopsis lanceolata* and the meadow has been further enriched by sweet flag, vanilla grass, lilies, gentians, *Calopogon*, *Pogonia* and hibiscus.

Nowhere else do the maiden hair and interrupted ferns grow more luxuriantly (Fig. 6). These in themselves would well

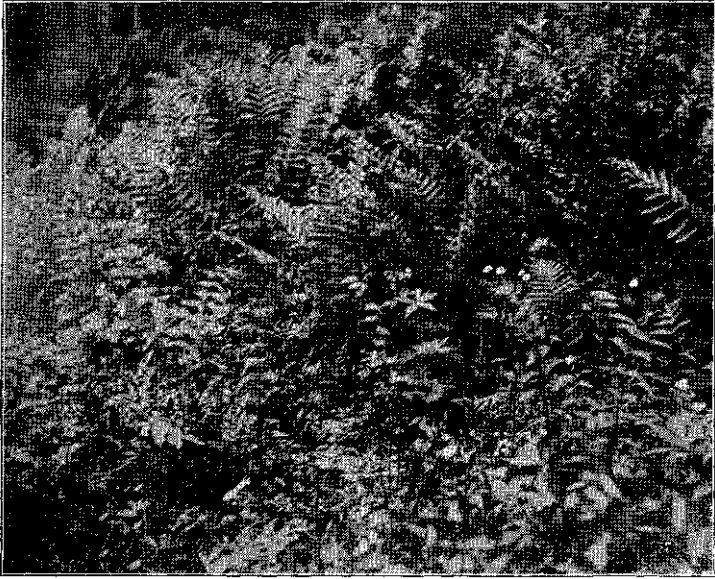


Fig. 6

repay a visit to the garden. To the ten indigenous ferns have been added twenty-seven others, so that now all the ferns of the state are represented except a few hybrids and some tiny forms, difficult of access, like *Cheilanthes*, *Woodsia Oregana* and the fragrant shield fern. We have also all the Minnesotan trees except jack pine and shell-bark hickory. Among the introduced shrubs may be enumerated *Carpinus*, witch hazel, hop tree, wahoo, Canadian holly, leatherwood, button bush, Labrador tea, bladdernut, mountain and striped maple. In short, during the three years of the garden's existence, three hundred and sixty-five species have been established, under the inviolate rule of admitting only native or naturalized Minnesotan plants.

A record of each species is kept in a card catalogue, to be located by number when the proposed minute topographical survey is completed.

We ardently hope that, adjacent to the wild garden, an artificial botanic garden and arboretum will sometime be instituted, wherein may be cultivated all the plants that can thrive in this climate.