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# ARNOLD ARBORETUM

HARVARD UNIVERSITY

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## BULLETIN

OF

## POPULAR INFORMATION



JAMAICA PLAIN, MASS.

JUNE 26, 1912

## BULLETIN NO. 28.

Among the other American Magnolias in the group on the right hand side of the Jamaica Plain entrance *Magnolia macrophylla* is now in flower. This is a medium-sized tree of the southern states where it is found in sheltered valleys and, although nowhere common, is widely distributed from western North Carolina to Kentucky, Florida, Alabama and Arkansas. No other tree of the northern hemisphere beyond the tropics bears larger leaves or larger flowers, for the former are from twenty to thirty inches long and from nine to ten inches wide, while the creamy white petals of the flower, which are marked with a dark red spot at the base of the inner surface and become reflexed above the middle when the flower opens, are from six to seven inches long and from three to four inches wide, the expanded flower being often a foot in diameter. The beauty of this tree is increased by the silvery white color of the lower surface of the leaves and by its symmetrical habit, with wide-spreading branches forming a broad, round-topped head. *Magnolia macrophylla* is perfectly hardy but it is well to plant it in sheltered positions for the leaves are easily torn by the wind. It is one of the most beautiful of all the Magnolias and one of the most remarkable and interesting trees of eastern North America; it is less commonly seen, however, in northern collections than formerly although its value and beauty appear to be more appreciated in some of the middle states than they are here.

One of the most attractive objects in the Shrub Collection this year is a large plant of *Halimodendron argenteum*, called Salt-tree because it inhabits the saline steppes near the river Irtysh in Siberia. The pale rose-colored, pea-shaped, fragrant flowers, which are produced in great abundance, are borne in short clusters and their delicate beauty is heightened by the light color of the leaves which are clothed with a pale silky down. The plant remains in flower during several weeks. The Salt-tree was introduced into England as early as 1779, but it does not seem to be much known in the United States, for among the rare plants sent to the Arboretum for determination it has come only once. It produces abundant crops of seeds in the Arboretum and it can be raised from cuttings, so there is no reason that it should remain so rare in American gardens.

In the Shrub Collection, near *Halimodendron*, another plant of the Pea Family is in flower; this is *Cytisus nigricans*, a low, slender, hardy shrub from central and southern Europe, with long erect racemes of beautiful yellow flowers, and for this climate one of the best plants of its class. With it are blooming *Genista elata* and the well known *Genista tinctoria* which has destroyed with its fatal gift of beauty so many of the fields of Essex County in this state.

Of the Privets, or Ligustrums, none of the introductions from eastern Asia are more valuable garden plants than the European *Ligustrum vulgare* which is becoming naturalized in the eastern states; it is a tall, broad, shapely shrub with bluish green leaves and is now covered with its small, erect, terminal clusters of white, bad-smelling flowers. The great value of this plant is not in the flowers but in the lustrous black fruits which decorate it in the late autumn, and in the fact that it retains its leaves in good condition almost until the beginning of winter, making

it one of the most desirable of all the shrubs which are hardy here for the decoration of parks and gardens. This Privet has been much used as a hedge plant for which it is well suited. There are varieties with greenish yellow fruit, with yellow leaves, and with erect branches. Of the Asiatic species *Ligustrum ibota* is perhaps now the best known of the hardy species here; it is a broad shrub sometimes ten feet high, with spreading slightly recurved branches, small, dark green leaves which turn purplish in the autumn, and short, nodding clusters of white flowers which are produced on short lateral branches and which are followed by clusters of small, purplish black fruit covered with a pale bloom and often persistent on the branches until spring. This is a handsome shrub but it has sometimes suffered from the cold of exceptionally severe winters. Equally handsome but of very different habit is its variety *Regelianum*; this is a much lower and denser shrub, with horizontally spreading branches which form a broad, flat-topped head, and larger leaves. As the two plants grow side by side in the Shrub Collection they appear very distinct, but seedlings of the variety are often identical with *L. ibota*. Another species, *L. amurense* from eastern Siberia, has also fruit covered with a bloom like that of *L. ibota*, but the branches terminate with larger flower-clusters, while the lateral flower-bearing branches are often longer than those of *L. ibota*. It is best distinguished, however, by its pyramidal habit, for it is a tall shrub with erect stems which form a narrow head. The Japanese *L. acuminatum* is a broad shrub with the largest flower-clusters near the ends of the stems and lustrous black fruit like that of *L. vulgare*. These Asiatic species are much confused in American nurseries and a number of plants are sold under the name of *L. amurense* which, on account of its hardiness, rapid growth, and erect stems, has been recommended as a hedge plant for regions which are too cold for the so-called California Privet; this is *L. ovalifolium* and is not a Californian but a Chinese plant. It has been much planted for hedges which in severe winters are often killed to the ground even in southern New England.

The earliest of the Hawthorns, the European *Crataegus nigra*, and the New England *C. Arnoldiana*, were in bloom on the 10th of May, and the flowers of the latest blooming species in the collection, *C. cordata*, the so-called Washington Thorn, are not yet fully expanded. This native of the southern Appalachian region and of southern Missouri is a slender narrow tree sometimes thirty feet high, with small, shining, nearly triangular leaves, and small, dull white flowers; its greatest beauty is in the autumn when the leaves, which do not fall until late, are bright orange and scarlet, and contrast beautifully with the small, bright scarlet, globose fruits which remain in good condition on the branches until spring. The only objection to this tree is the brittleness of the branches which are often split or broken by storms.

Among the fifty species or forms of *Viburnum* found to be hardy in the Arboretum the first to flower, *Viburnum alnifolium*, the Hobble Bush or Moosewood, was in bloom during the first week in May, and the flowers of the latest in the collection to open, *Viburnum Canbyi*, will not be fully out for several days, so that the flowering time of the *Viburnums* here extends through two months. *V. Canbyi* is a broad, tall, round-topped shrub with large lustrous leaves, large flat clusters of flowers and bright blue fruit. It is a native of eastern Pennsylvania and northern Delaware, and is nowhere common. It is one of

the native species which is greatly improved by cultivation and splendid large plants can be seen on the right-hand side of the entrance to the Administration Building and on the Meadow Road.

Some of the wild roses have been largely planted along several of the drives and their flowers add much to the interest and beauty of the Arboretum at this time. The flowers of the earliest of the five New England species, *Rosa blanda*, have already gone and the latest to flower, *R. caroliniana*, is not yet in bloom, but the others *R. virginiana* or *lucida*, *R. humilis*, and *R. nitida*, are at their best. The most beautiful of these three roses is perhaps *R. nitida* with its rather dark-colored flowers and short stems covered with bright red prickles. It is always dwarf in habit and is found from Massachusetts to Newfoundland. *R. virginiana*, which is the common rose of the New England seacoast, is a taller plant with thick very lustrous leaves, and flowers which range in color from dark red to pink. There is also a white-flowered form of this plant found in Maine a few years ago. In the Arboretum there are forms with thinner and duller leaves which may be natural hybrids with *R. humilis* which is the common Wild Rose of the interior, that is of regions beyond the immediate influence of the sea. This is a low plant with dull leaves, and the least ornamental of the native Roses. This Rose or some of its numerous hybrids are generally sold in nurseries for *R. virginiana*. The wild roses flower at the same time as *Cornus rugosa* mentioned in the last issue of these bulletins, and when this *Cornus* and these Roses are planted together a beautiful combination of color is obtained.

The first species to flower in the collection, and one of the gems of the genus, *Hypericum Buckleyi*, is just opening its bright yellow flowers in the Shrub Collection where it is now well established. It is a dwarf plant growing here only a few inches high, but spreading into a broad mat which becomes covered with flowers, and these remain in good condition for a long time. *H. Buckleyi* is very rare in cultivation, although it is well suited for a sunny position in the rock garden. Naturally it grows on rocky cliffs in the southern Appalachian region where it is nowhere very abundant.

A few of the fruits of early summer are beginning to be conspicuous in the Arboretum. The most beautiful, perhaps, are the bright keys of *Acer tataricum*, a small Maple tree from southeastern Europe and the adjacent parts of Asia. This is an early flowering, very hardy tree well worth cultivating for the brilliancy of its fruit alone. It is a very old inhabitant of the gardens of western Europe and the United States, but since the introduction of the Japanese Maples it has been rather lost sight of. Plants can be seen in the Maple collection. In the Shrub Collection the bright red fruits of a North American Elder, *Sambucus pubens*, are now beautiful and conspicuous, as are those of the rare variety of this plant with orange-colored fruits (var. *leucocarpa*). The fruits of the Old World plants of this group are still green or only just beginning to turn red.

**The Arboretum will be grateful for any publicity given these Bulletins.**



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