

ANOTHER EXTRACT FROM EGAN PAPERS

In This Paper the Wildflower Known as Lady's Slipper Is Described

Here is another interesting article in native wild flowers from the papers of the late W. C. Egan of Highland Park, recently arranged for publication by Mr. Jesse L. Smith. In this paper the well known Lady's Slipper is discussed.

Before the coming of the white man, the Lake County Minnehahas reveled in the beauties of the terrestrial orchids that bloomed at their feet, and called them Moccasin flowers. As our fair sex did not patronize this style of footwear, they called them Lady's Slippers. Our yellow form, *Cypripedium pubescens*, is sometimes called "Noah's Ark," and a Mexican species is known as the "Pelican flower." 25 years ago the handsomest of our native species, the pink *C. spectabile*, could be found quite plentifully if hunted for, while the Yellow Lady's Slipper was quite common, being found in open spaces in the woods.

Both are now quite rare and we have to depend upon plant collectors who obtain them in the swamps of Wisconsin and Michigan. They may be used in our planting with fair success if one is lucky in choosing a situation congenial to their wants.

Even after doing the best we know how to suit them, the element of luck still remains. They are children of the wilds and do not like man's adoption.

C. spectabile is the most fickle in its requirements as is shown in the fact that in its habits it occupies situations widely different in elevation, soil texture, and moisture conditions. In Wisconsin and Michigan it is found in the bogs and swamps, and years ago it was quite plentiful in the swamps south of Chicago, but here it ignores our wet ravine bottoms and Skokie swamps and selects slightly sloping "shelves" on our ravine banks, generally some 15 to 20 feet below the tops. In this connection it might be well to note the singular fact that our ravines contain plants characteristic of prairie soil, dry and moist woods, swamps and sandy areas. Plants collected here or brought in from the Wisconsin swamps are more likely to succeed if planted in open shade and on sloping ground. Of course, our ravine banks come near to their requirements. I recall a group at Mr. Harry Selfridge's at Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, of a hundred or more plants. The larger part occupied a sloping bank and when I saw them the second season after planting they looked happy and contented, while the balance that had been placed on level ground at the foot of the embankment were about gone. I had a small group north of a building at the end of a bed that was raised two feet on account of the natural slope of the ground that did splendidly for several years. The building was removed, the plants placed in a level bed, and I was soon called upon to mourn their loss. The yellow form is more easily grown, but you need not provide an old age pension for either kind.

Cypripedium candidum, the small white Lady's Slipper, and *C. parvi-*

florum, have been found as far north as Winnetka in swamps, and *C. acaule* in sandy soil on the banks of the Calumet River, or on raised beds in semi-shade, preferring a little leaf mould. In planting any of the shade loving species, they should not be placed immediately over the root system of large shrubs, which will absorb the food and moisture needed by the smaller plants.

The Shooting-Star or American Cowslip (*Dodecatheon Meadia*) is to

the manor born, and easily domesticated if given full sun. In the shade it does not seem to last long. It is essentially a prairie child, but it is often used in England as a rock plant. Like many spring bloomers, it loses its foliage after flowering, thus excluding it from the border unless some provision is made to cover the bare ground made vacant. It may, however, be planted in meadows where the grass is not cut early. When I was a boy, some 60 odd years

ago, I gathered them on the vacant prairies near Center avenue Chicago. I grow it in the border between my groupings of the Carpathian Harebell (*Campanula carpatica*) which are planted some 18 inches apart. These are late risers, and the Dodecatheons have a full chance to display their charms before the Campanulas claim their own. The Campanulas then send out their prostrate stems and hide the decaying foliage of their bed-fellows.



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