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No. 8

# ARNOLD ARBORETUM

HARVARD UNIVERSITY

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## BULLETIN

OF

## POPULAR INFORMATION



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## BULLETIN NO. 8.

The Western, or, as it is sometimes called, the Hardy Catalpa, *Catalpa speciosa*, is in flower this week. The true characters of this tree were overlooked by botanists until about thirty years ago when the remarkable durability of its wood first called much attention to it. It is a native of the valley of the Mississippi where on the rich, moist and often inundated bottom-lands of streams it sometimes attains the height of one hundred feet. It differs from the other American species, *Catalpa bignonioides*, which will not be in flower for two or three weeks, by the longer points of the leaves, by the larger flowers only slightly spotted on the inner side of the corolla and borne in short open few-flowered clusters, and by the stouter pods. It is a much hardier tree than the more southern species and has a more erect habit, and it grows more rapidly; indeed it often grows too rapidly and then sometimes suffers in cold winters from splits in the trunk. At one time much was expected of this tree and the agricultural and horticultural journals were filled with descriptions of its many virtues. All the Catalpas have only a thin layer of sapwood, and the whole trunk is therefore almost entirely composed of heartwood; this resists decay for a long time, and there are well authenticated records of Catalpa fence-posts having remained in the ground for half a century without deterioration. For the production of fence-posts, telegraph and other poles, no other tree gives a better yield if it is planted in rich soil. Catalpa wood is very soft, and the claims that this tree would supply the railroads with the best possible ties have not been fulfilled for the wood is too soft to resist the cutting of the rails. If as a timber tree the Western Catalpa is less valuable than was at one time supposed, it is the handsomest of all the Catalpas which have flowered in the United States and a fast-growing, desirable, ornamental tree. *Catalpa ovata* (sometimes called *Catalpa Kaempferi*), a native of central and western China, although first brought to this country from Japan where it has been cultivated for more than two centuries, is not yet in flower. This is a small tree which in July produces in great profusion its small light yellow flowers which are succeeded by slender pods. It is hardier than either of the American species but very inferior to them as an ornamental tree. A hybrid of this tree and one of the American species, *Catalpa Teasii*, is a valuable ornamental tree. It appeared several years in the nursery of J. C. Teas in Indiana, and is a perfectly hardy and fast-growing tree with larger leaves than either of its parents and enormous flower-clusters containing from two hundred to three hundred flowers. The corolla is slightly tinged with yellow and is marked by broad purple stripes. This hybrid will not be in flower until next month. *Catalpa Bungei* is established in the Arboretum where it appears perfectly hardy. This small tree is a native of northern China where it is often planted in temple gardens and was introduced by the Arboretum into the United States and Europe a few years ago. It has very dark green leaves and small yellow flowers in small clusters and, although it has not yet flowered here or in Europe, it will probably be of slight value as an ornamental tree. There is another plant usually called *Catalpa Bungei*. This is a dwarf, round-headed bush which is often planted in formal gardens where it is frequently seen grafted on the tall naked stems of one of the tree species. This dwarf, which never flowers, is really a form of *Catalpa bignonioides* and how it got the name of *Catalpa Bungei* is a mystery which will probably never be cleared up.



The right name is *Catalpa bignonioides*, var. *nana*, but nurserymen will probably continue to sell it as *Catalpa Bungei*. Two Chinese *Catalpas* raised from seeds collected by Mr. Wilson in the eastern part of the empire have passed successfully through the winter but it is too soon to speak of their value. The *Catalpas* are planted in a large group on the eastern slope of Bussey Hill between the Ashes and the Elms, and above the bank occupied by the Lilac Collection.

The flowering time of the Mock Oranges (*Philadelphus*) is at its height. The flowers of a few of the species have already fallen and the buds of others are still to open, but a large number of the species and hybrids are now at their best and the collection should be seen by all who are interested in handsome flowering shrubs. Attention is called to *Philadelphus grandiflorus*, *Philadelphus floridus*, and *Philadelphus latifolius* from the southern Appalachian region. Of the Asiatic species now in flower the most interesting is perhaps *Philadelphus pekinensis*. This forms a low, broad compact bush which is covered with small flowers faintly tinged with yellow. Of more open habit and later to flower is *Philadelphus sericanthus* from western China. There are good specimens of this new plant in the collection on the right-hand side of Bussey Hill Road which are just opening their pure white slightly fragrant flowers. The innumerable flower-buds of *Philadelphus microphyllus* are slowly opening. Less showy than most of the other species, not one surpasses this Rocky Mountain plant in delicacy and in the fragrance of its small flowers, and on the whole the American species and their hybrids of this genus are more beautiful garden plants than the Asiatic species which have up to this time been introduced into the Arboretum.

*Ligustrum ibota* is in flower. This Japanese and Chinese plant was sent to the Arboretum in 1878, and is now often seen in parks and gardens where it has been much planted in recent years. 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 in great quantities on short lateral branchlets, and which are followed by clusters of small, purplish black fruit often persistent on the branches until spring. This is one of the handsome species of the genus. 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 *Ligustrum ibota*. The common Privet of western Europe and several of its varieties are also in flower in the Shrub Collection.

Among the *Potentillas* in the Shrub Collection are two excellent plants for small gardens, as they do not grow to a large size and continue to flower for a long time. The first of these, *Potentilla davurica*, is a native of eastern Siberia and is covered with white flowers which look like miniature Roses; and the other, *Potentilla Friedrichsenii*, is a hybrid between *Potentilla davurica* and the well known *Potentilla fruticosa*. This hybrid is a handsomer plant than *Potentilla fruticosa* which it resembles in habit, with rather lighter yellow flowers and is one of the good introductions of recent years.

Two, at least, of the Old World Buckthorns (*Rhamnus*) seem destined to become naturalized in this part of the world. *Rhamnus catharticus*, the



best known species of the genus, already grows spontaneously in some of the eastern states, and seedlings of *Rhamnus Frangula* spring up so frequently in the Arboretum and grow so rapidly and vigorously that it is evidently entirely at home here. *Rhamnus catharticus* was probably much oftener planted in the United States a hundred years ago than it is now. New introductions have caused its value to be forgotten. This is unfortunate for this Buckthorn is a valuable shrub for our climate where it sometimes becomes a small tree at least thirty feet high. The flowers, like those of all Buckthorns, are inconspicuous but the leaves are bright and shining and remain on the branches after those of most shrubs have fallen, contrasting beautifully in the autumn with the black, shining fruits which make a fine display until late in the winter. This Buckthorn is one of the best hedge plants in this climate. *Rhamnus catharticus* is already out of flower and the fruit is formed, but *Rhamnus Frangula* is flowering and will continue to flower for a long time as the flowers open in succession so that green, red and black fruits appear together on the same branch, these being the colors the fruit assumes as it grows and ripens. *Rhamnus Frangula* is a tall shrub with slender erect stems and branches and very lustrous leaves which, like those of the other species of the group, fall in the autumn without change of color. The Buckthorn Group is on the left-hand side of the Meadow Road where these species can be seen. *Rhamnus Frangula* is planted, too, in other parts of the Arboretum, and it can often be seen in the shrubberies of the Boston parks.

On the cover of the June 15th issue of *Country Life in America* a water-color drawing of the Sargent Rose by Mr. George Walter Dawson of the University of Pennsylvania is reproduced. The Sargent Rose was raised at the Arboretum in 1903 and is the result of a cross between the Hybrid Perpetual Rose and a hybrid, Baroness Rothschild, made at the Arboretum by Mr. Dawson between *Rosa Wichuraiana* and the Crimson Rambler. The flowers are cup-shaped, pale clear pink and semi-double, that is there are two rows of petals, and they are produced in large clusters, each composed of from fifty to sixty flowers. The flowers open gradually and in succession, so that the plant is covered with flowers for several weeks. The Sargent Rose is one of the handsomest Roses that has been raised in the United States. The original plant, which is now about eight feet high and eight or nine feet through, is now in flower and can be seen in the nursery at Mr. Dawson's house on Centre Street near the Centre Street entrance. This nursery can also be reached by a path leading from the right of the Bussey Hill Road above the Lilacs.

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An illustrated guide to the Arboretum containing a map showing the position of the different groups of plants has recently been published. It will be found useful to persons unfamiliar with the position of the different groups of plants. Copies of this guide can be obtained at the Administration Building in the Arboretum, from the Secretary of the Massachusetts Horticultural Society, 300 Massachusetts Avenue, Boston, from The Houghton, Mifflin Company, 4 Park Street, Boston, and at the Old Corner Bookstore, Bromfield Street, Boston.

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



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