

Gray Herbarium



Harvard University

B. L. ROBINSON, Curator,
Asa Gray Prof. Syst. Bot.
M. L. FERNALD,
Fisher Prof. Nat. Hist. (Bot.)
MARY A. DAY, Librarian
EDITH M. VINCENT,
Assistant in Library
IVAN M. JOHNSTON, Assistant

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, U.S.A.

Dec. 14, 1922.

Dear Mr. Waatherby,-

You were indiscreet enough, or kind enough to leave a lopp-hole which Dodge and I are forced to take advantage of, for we have spent a large amount of time in the last three weeks writing to many people and waiting for their answers which have been absolutely uniform;—Mackenzie, Bicknell, Lambert, Hunnewell, Weston, Dodge, Thaxter, Wiegand and various others all turning us down and leaving us with absolutely no programme for the New England Botanical Club meeting, largely because of the various conflicts with meetings and because people who have anything to do are doing it somewhere else!

I had picked out a wall exhibit and series of recently described plants along with the species from which they have been segregated, and had planned to say something of this sort in a ten minute explanation of the exhibit, namely: that the necessity of segregating new species is by no means a modern one, but that from the earliest settlement of North America there was a tendency to "lump" all American plants with something similar which had been known in Europe, with the result that the earliest systematists who worked with American plants, like Linnaeus, segregated many American species from the European, but left many other included with them which their successors have gradually found upon study have perfectly constant characters of flowers or fruit. A large proportion of these things were recognized by the systematists of one to one-and-a-half centuries ago, but they were too advanced for their time, and only within recent years have many of their species been recognized as wholly justified. For instance, Linnaeus recognized *Polypodium virginianum*, *Anemone quinquefolia*, etc. Michaux and Jacob Bigelow and others pointed out differences in other species which were falsely passing in America as Old World types, and the process of eliminating these falsely identified species in America is still going on from time to time, and instead of making confusion in Botany, is really clarifying the subject and putting our classification upon a sound, instead of a careless and inaccurate basis. That was the kind of sermon I proposed to preach merely because there would be many people there, who, with Rand, Williams and others love to say "Damn the segregaters"!

The exhibit which I picked out consists of *Polypodium vulgare* and *virginianum*; *Anemone anemerosa* and *quinquefolia*; with sketches on the sheet of the very different achenes; *Circaea lutetiana* and *latifolia*, with penciled sketches of the petals and fruits; *Trientalis europea* and *T. borealis*; *Oxalis Acetosella* and *O. montana*, with sketches on the sheets of the petals and capsules; *Hepatica nobilis* and *H. americana*, with sketches of the very different achenes; *Vallisneria spiralis*, *V. americana*, showing the staminate spathes; *Ammophila arenaria* and *A. brevilegulata*, with the ligules pointed out; *Rhynchospora macrotachya*

and *R. inundata*; *Ericaulon septangulare* and *E. Parkeri*; *Juncus Roemerianus* and *J. pervetus*; *Anemone virginiana* and *A. riparia*, showing the fruiting heads; *Cardamine pennsylvanica* and *C. Longii*; *Arabis laevigata* and *A. viridis*; *Rubus allegheniensis*, *R. frondisensis*, *R. pergratus*, *R. recurvans*, *R. elegantulus*, *R. abbrevians*, *R. setosus*; *Empetrum nigrum*; ~~*Antropurpuream*~~; *Hypericum boreale*, *H. dissimulatum*; the 4 *Helianthemums*; *Sanicula canadensis* and *S. trifoliata*; *Sabatia decandra* and *dodecandra* and *Kennedyana*; ~~sub-species~~ of *Antennaria*; *Iva frutescens* and *oraria*; *Gentiana detonsa*, *procera* and *Mesophila*, and the two species of *Erechtites*. My plan was simply to have this exhibit strung up on the wall where people could look at it if they wished, and with a five to ten minute introduction, let the thing go at that. Then there would be something which they could chew over at their leisure without further discussions, since the specimens speak for themselves.

Now, Ware is clamoring for the programme to print, and as a very last resort, after trying every one under the sun, Dodge and I have decided that the only thing I can do is to read one of my two ~~un-announced~~ ~~printed~~ papers before the Systematic Section by title, and to say that it will be given at the evening meeting. That will relieve the pressure in the Systematic Section which has an altogether too full programme, since many titles and abstracts were sent in in response to an S.O.S. call I sent out at the very last minute. So I am forced to give a paper of twenty minutes to make up the programme, and we have decided to rely upon your good nature and your knowledge of the general situation to make the speech introducing the exhibit.

I trust that this will not prove too serious a burden, and the general trend which I have outlined will be sufficiently clear so that you will not have to spend much time or thought in organizing your remarks.

Kindly let me know by postal card if you agree, so that the programme may be printed promptly. It is already time to get it in. I greatly appreciate the fact that you left a slight loop hole in your letter declining to speak, because that, we trust, has solved a somewhat difficult problem.

Very sincerely yours,

M. L. Fernald

MLF/FMG



Fernald, Merritt Lyndon. 1922. "Fernald, Merritt Lyndon Dec. 14, 1922 [Fernald to C.A. Weatherby]." *Merritt Lyndon Fernald correspondence*

View This Item Online: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/258582>

Permalink: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/277356>

Holding Institution

Harvard University Botany Libraries

Sponsored by

Andrew W. Mellon Foundation

Copyright & Reuse

Copyright Status: Public domain. The BHL considers that this work is no longer under copyright protection.

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.