ARNOLD ARBORETUM

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Effects of the Winter in the Arboretum. The effects of the heavy rainfall of the past summer and of the hot dry autumn which thoroughly ripened the wood of trees and shrubs are now shown in the generally good condition of the Arboretum collections which promise abundant crops of flowers and fruit. A few flower-buds have been killed, and there are occasionally brown leaves on Rhododendrons and other broad-leaved evergreens, but not so many as usual at this season of the year. Exotic conifers, including the new Firs, Spruces and Pines from western China, are generally uninjured but the foliage of the native White Cedar (*Chamaecyparis thyoides*) is badly disfigured. For some reason not easy to explain this tree has never taken kindly to the Arboretum conditions, and suffers here more or less every winter.

It is a late spring in eastern Massachusetts, but several plants have already flowered in the Arboretum or are now flowering here. The flowers of the White Maple (*Acer saccharinum*) have nearly passed, but those of many of the Elms are now open and have rarely been more abundant; and the Scarlet Maple (*Acer rubrum*) enlivens the landscape with its bright red flowers.

Winter-flowering Witch Hazels. The flowers of these interesting plants have never been more beautiful and abundant than this year, although they appeared much later than usual. The flowers of *Hamamelis vernalis*, the species from southern Missouri, usually open late in December and in January, and those of the Japanese and Chinese species are usually fully open in January and February; but with the

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exception of a few precocious flowers on a branch of one of the plants of *H. vernalis* which opened late in December, none of these plants were in flower this year until the middle of March. In the size of the flowers and in the length and brilliancy of the bright yellow petals *Hamamelis mollis*, a native of western China, is the handsomest of all the Witch Hazels. The pale green foliage of this shapely shrub is also attractive. It is very hardy and grows rapidly, and might well find a place in any garden or city plot in public view during the winter months. This Witch Hazel is one of the most valuable and interesting shrubs brought in recent years to the United States.

Prunus Davidiana. This is the earliest of the Plum, Cherry, Peach and Apricot groups to flower this year. It is one of the wild Peaches of northern China, and is a small tree with lustrous red-brown bark, slender erect branches which form a narrow head, small flowers, narrow pointed leaves and small fruit of no edible value. The flowers are usually of the color of those of the common Peach-tree, and there is a form with pure white flowers. The two forms have been covered with flowers during the past week in the Peach and Apricot Group on the right-hand side of the Meadow Road before its junction with the Forest Hills and Bussey Hill Roads. As a flowering tree in this climate this Peach has little to recommend it for the flower-buds or the flowers are killed almost every year by late frosts, but just now pomologists in this country are interested in it as a possible stock on which to work the common Peach-tree, as it is hardy north of the region where the Peach thrives.

Early Rhododendrons. Several plants of the Siberian and north China *Rhododendron dahuricum* have been in bloom on the upper side of Azalea Path during the past week. This shrub has been in European gardens for more than a century but is still little known in the United States. It has small dark green leaves which in this climate remain on the branches until late in the winter, and small bright rose-colored flowers. These are often destroyed by spring frosts, and this plant has never been so beautiful before in the Arboretum as it is this spring. There is a variety *sempervirens* with more persistent leaves and darker-colored flowers. This variety is not blooming this year. Usually *Rhododendron mucronulatum* is the earliest of the Rhododendrons to bloom in the Arboretum but this year it is a week later than *R. dahuricum*, and is only now opening its paler rose-colored flowers. This is a tall, perfectly hardy, deciduous-leaved shrub which has flowered freely every spring in the Arboretum for the last twenty years and is chiefly valuable for the earliness of the flowers which appear on the leafless branches and are rarely injured by spring frosts. In the Arboretum the leaves turn bright yellow before falling late in the autumn. There is a large group of these plants on the lower side of Azalea Path.

Early Magnolias. The flower-buds of the Japanese *Magnolia stellata* have been nearly all killed in the Arboretum. This should not, how-

R.R.

Gift

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