
ARNOLD ARBORETUM

HARVARD UNIVERSITY



BULLETIN

OF

POPULAR INFORMATION

JAMAICA PLAIN, MASS.

MAY 8, 1917

The exceptionally cold and sunless weather of the last week of April and of the early days of May has greatly retarded the advance of vegetation, and very few plants are in bloom in the Arboretum; and on the 3d of May leaf-buds were still generally closed. An exception, however, is found in

Prinsepia sinensis. The leaves of this Chinese shrub, which are among the first in the Arboretum to unfold, are already nearly fully grown and the flowers are opening; these are bright yellow, about two-thirds of an inch in diameter, and appear in few-flowered clusters in the axils of the leaves. This *Prinsepia* is a tall, vigorous, perfectly hardy shrub, with ascending and spreading spiny branches, and is perfectly at home in eastern Massachusetts. It will probably prove here to be an excellent and very ornamental hedge plant. Unfortunately the red berry-like fruit is rarely produced here, so that this plant can be increased only by cuttings. The largest plant in the Arboretum is on the upper side of Hickory Path near Centre Street; a plant is also in the Shrub Collection. Another species, *Prinsepia uniflora*, a native also of northern China, is established in the Arboretum; it is a more spiny shrub with small white flowers, and as an ornamental plant has little to recommend it.

Corylopsis. A year ago attention was called in one of these Bulletins to the flowering of some of these plants in the collection of Chinese shrubs on the southern slope of Bussey Hill. The flower-buds are often injured in this climate by spring frosts but last spring they es-

caped and now these plants are again covered with flowers. *Corylopsis* is a genus of the Witch Hazel Family and is confined to the Himalayas and to China and Japan. They are shrubs with leaves which generally resemble those of the Witch Hazel and drooping spikes of fragrant clear yellow flowers. Two species discovered by Wilson in western China, *Corylopsis Veitchiana* and *C. Willmottae*, are now in bloom on Bussey Hill, and on the lower side of Hickory Path near Centre Street there is a plant of the rare Japanese *C. Gotoana* also in flower. This plant, which is not rare in central Japan, appears to be little known in gardens. The Arboretum specimen was raised here from seed collected in Japan in 1905 by Mr. Jack, and has now flowered here for several years. The flower-buds seem less liable to injury by spring frosts than those of some of the other species, and it is probable that when this beautiful shrub is better known it will become popular for the decoration of the spring garden. The flowers are of a delicate canary-yellow color and paler than those of the other species.

Rhododendron praecox, "Little Gem." This is the first of the ever-green Rhododendrons to bloom; it is a variety of *R. praecox* which is a hybrid between the Himalayan *R. ciliatum* and the Siberian *R. dahuricum* mentioned in the last issue of these Bulletins. *R. praecox* is a shrub two or three feet high with thick oval leaves bright green on the upper surface and rusty below, and few-flowered clusters of pale purple or lilac flowers which in the variety Little Gem are somewhat larger and paler in color. This variety is a handsome plant and would be a desirable ornament for the spring garden were not the flowers too often destroyed by spring frosts. This spring, as they were last year, the plants are beautifully in flower and can be seen in the Rhododendron Collection at the base of Hemlock Hill.

Prunus mandshurica. This is a hardy Apricot tree which grows vigorously in the Arboretum, and can now be seen in flower in the Peach and Apricot Group on the slope above the Meadow Road beyond the piece of natural woods. By some authors this tree is considered a variety of the common Apricot (*P. Armeniaca*) but it is very distinct from that tree in the pale bark on the stem and branches and in the shape of the leaves. The flowers which have a deep red calyx and petals faintly tinged with rose are nearly an inch across and are just now conspicuous on the leafless branches. The fruit is nearly globular, not more than an inch in diameter, yellow spotted with red, with sweet succulent flesh; it is inferior to that of cultivated forms of the common Apricot, but as *P. mandshurica* is very hardy varieties may perhaps be developed with the fruit as good as that of the best cultivated Apricots, and hardy where that tree cannot be cultivated. This Apricot as it now grows in the Arboretum is an important addition to the group of hardy ornamental early-flowering trees.

Prunus dehiscens. This little almond is now in flower in the collection of Chinese shrubs on the southern slope of Bussey Hill. It is a small, spiny, intricately branched shrub with small pale pink flowers

which open before the leaves unfold and small compressed fruit covered with hairs, with thin dry flesh splitting open at maturity. This shrub was discovered by Wilson in western China and is very similar and possibly identical with the more northern *Prunus mongolica*, which is not in the Arboretum collection. As far as it is possible to judge at this time *Prunus dehiscens* is inferior to the related *Prunus triloba* from northern China and Korea, and in its single-flowered form one of the most beautiful of all spring-flowering shrubs.

Maddenia hypoleuca. To persons who care only for plants with showy flowers Maddenia will have little interest, but in the Arboretum the flowering of one of these plants for the first time in America is considered a matter of some importance. Maddenia is a genus of shrubs or small trees found only on the Himalayas and in western China where Wilson discovered three of the five known species. Maddenia is related to the Choke or Rum Cherries but, unlike them, the flowers are without petals; they are borne in short clusters and consist of a green calyx tinged with red and divided at the apex into two rows of short narrow lobes, numerous stamens with slender filaments and bright yellow anthers and longer than the short style; this in some flowers is rudimentary or entirely wanting, perfect and staminate flowers often appearing in the same cluster. The fruit, like that of the other species, is small, globose, black and cherry-like. *Maddenia hypoleuca* is in the collection of Chinese shrubs on the southern slope of Bussey Hill near *Prunus dehiscens*.

Forsythias. It is three years since the Forsythias have bloomed as they are blooming this year, for last year and the year before many of the flower-buds of some of the species were killed in the Arboretum by severe winter cold. This year the flower-buds are uninjured and the flowers of many of the plants are now at their best. Those of the Servian *F. europaea*, however, will not open for a few days. Apart from the value of all the species as garden plants Forsythia is of special interest to gardeners for, like Syringa and Philadelphus, it is a genus whose species hybridize freely and produce new seedling forms which are often superior to the parents. The hybrid Forsythias are probably all natural, that is, they have probably all appeared without man's assistance, and those which are now known appear to have been produced by the crossing of *F. viridissima* with *F. suspensa* or its variety, *Fortunei*. The general name of these plants is *Forsythia intermedia* and there are several forms. Those in the Arboretum collection are planted at the rear of the large mass of Forsythias on the bank at the base of the Bussey Hill Road, below the Lilac Collection. The handsomest of them is *F. intermedia spectabilis*, and of all the Forsythias which have been grown in the Arboretum this is the most beautiful. The flowers are larger than those of its parents, and deep bright yellow. This plant was sent to the Arboretum from Germany several years ago. Other distinct and handsome forms of the hybrid are var. *primulina* and var. *pallida*; the former has pale primrose colored flowers and appeared as a seedling in the Arboretum a few

years ago. The var. *pallida* has pale straw-colored flowers which are paler than than those of other Forsythias. The flower-buds of these hybrids appear to suffer less from extreme cold than those of either of their parents, at least in the Arboretum, and the buds of the different forms of *F. intermedia* have never been injured by cold.

Salix blanda. This is the general name for the group of hybrid Willows which has come into existence by the natural hybridization of the yellow-barked *Salix viminalis* with the Chinese Weeping Willow, *Salix babylonica*. These hybrids are large, hardy and vigorous trees, with branches as slender and pendulous as those of *Salix babylonica*. What may be considered the typical form of *S. blanda* has light olive green branches. On other forms the branches are more or less tinged with yellow. The handsomest of them has bright yellow branches, especially at this season of the year, and is still without a proper name, although it is sold in nurseries as *Salix babylonica aurea*, *S. babylonica ramulis aureis* and sometimes as *S. vitellina pendula*, although there is a weeping form of the true *S. vitellina* to which this last name belongs. The yellow-barked variety of *S. blanda* is the handsomest of the Weeping Willows which can be successfully grown in the northern states where *S. babylonica* is not always hardy. At this time with its pale yellow unfolding leaves and yellow spikes of flower-buds this tree is an object of great beauty and one of the most attractive plants in the Arboretum. *Salix blanda* is not common in the neighborhood of Boston and probably has not been much planted in any part of the United States.

It is much less well known than the hybrid of *S. babylonica* and the European *S. fragilis* for which the general name is probably *S. sepulcralis*— probably, for it is often impossible to decide what is the correct name for hybrid Willows as there is still much confusion about their origin and history. To the *S. fragilis babylonica* hybrid belong the so-called Wisconsin Weeping Willow which has been largely planted in the northern states, and is a hardy and valuable tree. Its origin is not known at the Arboretum. Thurber's Weeping Willow, named for the Massachusetts nurseryman by whom it has been distributed, is probably of the same parentage. Another hybrid known as *Salix Salamonii* is of the same parentage or is the result of the crossing of the European *Salix alba* with *S. babylonica*. This tree is highly esteemed in Europe but in this country is little known. It is a large, vigorous and hardy tree, with ascending branches and gracefully drooping branchlets, the whole forming a broad head of great beauty. This is a good time to examine the Willow Collection for many of the species, hybrids and varieties are flowering or just coming into bloom, and the flowers of Willows are often very beautiful. The Willow Collection is arranged along the northeast border of the north meadow, and is most easily reached from the Jamaica Plain entrance of the Arboretum.