
ARNOLD ARBORETUM

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Laurels. The flowering of the Laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*) is the last of the great flower shows of the year in the Arboretum, and none of those which precede it are more beautiful, for the Mountain Laurel, or Calico Bush, as it is often called, is for many persons the most beautiful of all North American shrubs or small trees. It is certainly the most satisfactory of the broad-leaved evergreen plants which can be grown in this climate, for it is perfectly hardy, flowers freely every year, and the leaves are not injured by the lace-wing fly which is so destructive to those of most Rhododendrons. It is not perhaps strange that so little attention has been paid to this plant by American gardeners for those of earlier generations at least derived their inspiration almost entirely from England and usually despised American plants as too common for their attention. For some reason which is not easy to explain *K. latifolia* has not been a popular plant in England where it is still not often seen and where it certainly grows less freely than many species and hybrids of Rhododendrons. For this reason, perhaps, no distinct forms of the Laurel and no hybrids have been developed by cultivators, and the few recognized variations in the flowers and leaves have all been found on wild plants. Of these there are forms with pure white flowers, and a form with deep pink, nearly red flowers and rather darker leaves; and between these extremes there are others with flowers of all shades of pink, and one form with flowers distinctly marked by a chocolate band. There is a dwarf form with small leaves and small clusters of minute flowers, and there is one in which the corolla is deeply divided into narrow lobes. A form with broad handsome Rhododendron-like leaves, which rarely flowers, was

found a few years ago near Pomfret, Connecticut. These forms are all established in the general *Kalmia* Collection which is planted on both sides of Hemlock Hill Road at the northern base of Hemlock Hill. On the right hand side of this road are groups of the dwarf *Kalmia angustifolia*, the well-known Sheep Laurel of northern pastures with bright red flowers, and of *K. carolina* from southern swamps and woods from Virginia to South Carolina, with flowers very similar to those of the Sheep Laurel but with leaves pale pubescent on the lower surface. *K. polifolia*, a straggling shrub with leaves white glaucous beneath and rose-purple flowers, is also growing in the Arboretum but it is not a particularly satisfactory plant in cultivation.

Cornus kousa is a small tree which enlivens the forests of eastern Asia as *C. florida* enlivens those of eastern North America and *C. Nuttallii* those of western North America. The three species have the large white or creamy white bracts under the flower clusters which make the inflorescence so conspicuous but the Asiatic tree differs from the American trees by the union of the fruit into a globose fleshy head, while the fruits of the American trees are not united together. *C. kousa* is a small tree rarely exceeding twenty feet in height, and the floral bracts are narrower, more pointed and not as pure white as those of the American trees. It is valuable, however, because it flowers three or four weeks later than *C. florida*. *C. kousa* is a native of central Japan. It is now in flower on the right hand side of the Centre Street Path where the tree, raised from seeds produced in Mr. H. S. Hunnewell's garden in Wellesley, is now the best specimen in the Arboretum. A handsomer tree is the form var. *chinensis*, discovered by Wilson on the mountains of Hupeh in western China. The bracts under the flower clusters are broader than those of the Japanese form and overlap below the middle so that they form, like those of the American species, a cup at the end of a branch. The Chinese Flowering Dogwood is rare in cultivation, and the specimen among the Chinese plants on the southern base of Bussey Hill is probably the only large one in this country. For several years it has ripened a few seeds and it is not improbable that this year the seeds may be more numerous. It is an interesting fact that here in Massachusetts the Chinese and Japanese Flowering Dogwoods are hardier than the native species as *C. florida* loses many of its flower-bracts in severe winters and is often killed or severely injured here by the extreme cold.

Late-flowering Magnolias. The Sweet Bay, *Magnolia virginiana*, or as it is more often called *M. glauca*, opened its fragrant cup-shaped flowers several days ago and will continue to open them until midsummer. A plant for every garden, great or small, how often is the Sweet Bay found in those of modern construction? *M. macrophylla* flowers a few days later than *M. virginiana* and is the last of the American species to open its flowers here. It is a handsome tree with leaves silvery white on the lower surface and often thirty inches long and ten inches wide, and flowers a foot in diameter. A southern tree with its northern stations in the Piedmont region of North Carolina and in Kentucky, it is perfectly hardy in eastern Massachusetts, although here as elsewhere the leaves are often torn by the wind unless a sheltered

position is selected for it. It is interesting as the leaves and flowers are larger than those of any other tree which grows in extra tropical regions. *M. Watsonii*, a shrub which was first found in a Japanese nursery, and is unknown as a wild plant, is also in flower. Its relationship is with *M. parviflora*, a small Japanese tree which grows as far north as Korea; it has usually not been hardy in the Arboretum, but two years ago and this year the plant on the upper side of the Centre Street Path has been covered with flowers which are extremely fragrant, differing in this from those of *M. parviflora*.

Indigofera amblyantha is in flower as usual on the left hand side of the Centre Street Path. It is a slender shrub with small leaves and axillary clusters of small rose-colored flowers which appear continuously for two or three months. This is one of the most beautiful of the small shrubs introduced by Wilson from western China where he found it growing on river cliffs in Hupeh at altitudes up to six thousand feet above the sea-level.

Sophora viciifolia. There are not many shrubs with blue flowers which are perfectly hardy in this climate, and none of them are as satisfactory as this *Sophora* which is a native of central and western China where it is a common undershrub in dry hot valleys. In the Arboretum it is a shapely, perfectly hardy plant four or five feet high, and produces small blue and white pea-shaped flowers in great profusion blooming here every year. In the Arboretum it has proved one of the most attractive of the small shrubs of recent introduction. It can be seen now in flower on the right hand side of the Centre Street Path and in the Bussey Hill Collection.

Cornus controversa is a widely distributed plant in Korea and western China where it sometimes grows to a height of sixty feet with a trunk seven feet in girth. The largest of these trees in the Arboretum is in the Peter's Hill Nursery and is now about twenty-five feet high with a short trunk and a head from twenty-five to thirty feet in diameter. The branches are long, crowded, and spread at right angles with the stem, drooping slightly at the ends, the lowest sweeping the ground. The upper side of the branches is thickly covered with flat flower-clusters six or seven inches in diameter. The flowers are white or white faintly tinged with yellow and are followed by black shining fruits which are eaten by birds as fast as they ripen. As it grows on Peter's Hill this *Cornus* is a magnificent plant, and the handsomest of the species of *Cornus* in the Arboretum with the exception of the species with white floral bracts. To the student of botanical geography *C. controversa* is interesting as a living witness of the relationship between the floras of eastern Asia and eastern North America, for in the genus *Cornus* with many species widely distributed over the world there are but two with alternate leaves, *C. controversa*, common in eastern Asia, and *C. alternifolia*, common in eastern North America, also in flower at this time.

Laburnum alpinum is still covered with its long racemes of clear yellow flowers and has shown, as it has now for many years, its value

in our northern gardens. *L. alpinum* is a native of the elevated regions of southern Europe, and is usually spoken of as the "Scotch Laburnum" probably because it is a favorite in the gardens of northern Britain. In those of New England it is extremely rare, although it is the handsomest large shrub with yellow flowers which is perfectly hardy here. It is hardier than *L. vulgare*, or, as it is often called, *L. anagyroides*, the small tree with shorter racemes of flowers which has been a good deal planted in the eastern states and which at the north is not always hardy, although occasionally good specimens are to be seen in the neighborhood of Boston. There are several garden forms of this Laburnum. A better plant for New England than *L. vulgare* is its hybrid with *L. alpinum*, known as *L. Watereri* or *L. Parksii*, already out of bloom. This is a hardy small tree and when in flower the handsomest tree with yellow flowers which can be grown in this climate.

Some Asiatic Spiraeas. One of the handsomest of all Spiraeas is *S. trichocarpa*, a common and widely distributed shrub in northern Korea where Wilson found it on the Diamond Mountains in the autumn of 1917, and sent seeds to the Arboretum. He describes it as a dense bush about three feet high with spreading rigid, and slightly drooping branches. It promises, however, to grow to a larger size in cultivation in this country. The flowers are white, and arranged in rounded or dense, conical, many-flowered clusters an inch and a half in diameter, at the end of short lateral leafy branches. This Spiraea has proved perfectly hardy in the Arboretum and promises to be an important addition to American gardens. A copy of a photograph of the wild plant made by Wilson in Korea appeared in the Gardeners' Chronicle, of London, August 11, 1923. *S. Henryi* is a taller shrub, growing to a height of eight or ten feet with spreading branches, and branchlets sparingly pilose or nearly glabrous, obovate or oblong to oblanceolate leaves cuneate at the base and acute or rounded at the usually coarsely dentate apex. The flower-clusters are about two inches across and the flowers are a quarter of an inch in diameter. This is one of Wilson's introductions from western China, and has proved an excellent garden plant in this country. These two plants can best be seen on the lower side of the Centre Street Path. *S. Sargentiana*, another of Wilson's discoveries in western China, now growing with other Chinese plants on the southern slope of Bussey Hill, has not always proved perfectly hardy in this climate but this year for the first time is flowering profusely. It is a graceful shrub, very similar to *S. canescens*, growing to the height of about six feet with slender spreading branches, terete branchlets first puberulous but soon becoming glabrous, with oblong-elliptic leaves narrowed into the petiole, slightly toothed at the apex, puberulous above and villose below. The flowers are produced in dense flat corymbs an inch to an inch and three-quarters across, and the white flowers are a quarter of an inch in diameter with a villose calyx.