



lorenzo · cazenovia · new york wildflowers of the dark aisle



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“Insult not nature with absurd expense
Nor spoil her simple charms by vain pretence;
Weigh well the subject, be with caution bold,
Profuse of genius, not profuse of gold.”

Humphrey Repton, Esq.
The Art of Landscape Gardening

THE SYRACUSE GARDEN CLUB BICENTENNIAL PROJECT AT LORENZO

In 1843, Ledyard Lincklaen became the new master of Lorenzo. Within the historic grove of trees which form the Dark Aisle can be found two stones set by him. The one on the south side is carved with Lincklaen's cipher and the legend, "Pines Planted 1854-60". The second stone on the west side has the legend, "Spruces set 1858 L. L.". Further documentation is provided by the detailed notations made by Lincklaen in the "House Book".

Many of the trees that Ledyard Lincklaen planted still stand. It is under the canopy of their branches that the Syracuse Garden Club has begun the process of encouraging native wild flowers to take the place of the weedy undergrowth that had begun to erode the former charm of the Dark Aisle.

The challenge in a restoration project of this kind is to meld horticulture and history. The trees of the Dark Aisle do just this. These trees have achieved such dominance over the years that it is they that now control the soil and light conditions, they that set the mood of continuity and the appropriateness of an under planting of native wild flowers.

It is these same trees that may lead the historical researcher to Ledyard Lincklaen's library and to one book in particular, *Landscape Gardening and Rural Architecture* by Andrew Downing. This book was purchased by Lincklaen in 1843, the same year that he became the new master of Lorenzo. Downing was one of America's first great landscape architects. "The graceful and the picturesque are characters abounding even in small portions of nature," he wrote in his earlier book, *A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening*. It is reasonable to assume that Downing undoubtedly was the source of inspiration for the successive tree plantings which now provide the shelter for the wildflowers of the Dark Aisle.

ADDER'S TONGUE
Erythronium americanum

Also known as Trout-lily, this member of the Lily Family grows in woods, in northern and eastern states. A small bulb sends up two mottled green leaves, and, in April, a nodding yellow flower with reflexed petals appears on stems four to ten inches tall.



BANEBERRY
Actaea

Red (*A. rubra*) and White (*A. pachypoda*) Baneberry are distinctive members of the large Crowfoot Family. They grow to twenty-four inches, having leaves divided and subdivided into sharply toothed leaflets. In May, tiny, creamy white flowers appear on terminal stems above the leaves. Red Baneberry produces vivid red berries. The White Baneberry has white berries each having a prominent black spot giving rise to its common name of "doll's eyes".



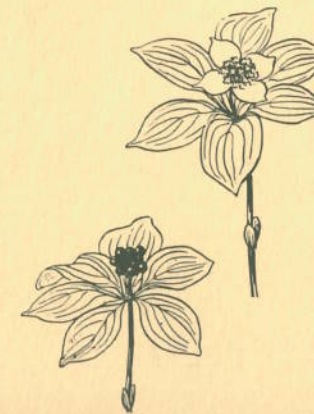
BLACK SNAKEROOT
Cimicifuga racemosa

A very tall, four to six feet, plant of the Crowfoot Family, it is a fine accent in a background setting. On a straight stem appear racemes of tiny creamy white flowers, blooming in July and August. It requires woodland conditions and can be found from Massachusetts to Ontario southward.



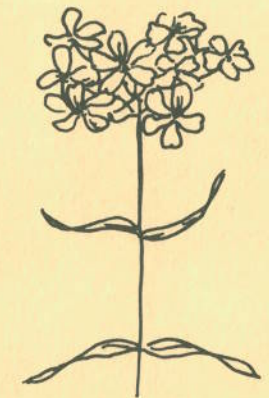
BLUE PHLOX
Phlox divaricata

This member of the Phlox Family enhances woodlands with drifts of lavender-blue flowers, twelve to eighteen inches tall in early June. Its shiny delicate dark green leaves remain as an attractive ground cover after the flowers have gone by. Creeping Phlox (*Phlox stolonifera*) is a smaller relative whose flower colors range from pinks through to good blues, and there are white forms. Its leaves are finer, also. It spreads easily because of its stoloniferous habit.



BLOODROOT
Sanguinaria canadensis

In early April, pure white flowers with many golden stamens appear, before the gray-green leaves which have three to nine lobes and which curve upward with underside out. It grows to nine inches and thrives in rich woods. Its red juice and roots are poisonous. A member of the Poppy Family.



BUNCHBERRY
Cornus canadensis

A delightful semi-evergreen ground cover, growing four to six inches tall in acid, wet, northern woods and bogs. The stem is leafless except at the top where a whorl of leaves appears below four white bracts with a central cluster of tiny golden flowers. In the Fall, the foliage turns bronze colored, topped by bright red berries. A member of the Dogwood Family, it is found in eastern Canada and United States.

CARDINAL FLOWER
Lobelia Cardinalis

This plant belongs to the Lobelia sub-family of the Bluebell family. It is one of America's favorite wild-flowers, visited by and chiefly fertilized by the Ruby-throated hummingbird. A slender spike of intense scarlet flowers grows atop a tall stem of two to four feet, with lance-shaped leaves. It blooms in mid-Summer. It grows in moist ground in Eastern United States.



DUTCHMAN'S-BREECHES
Dicentra cucullaria

This dainty, uniquely flowered plant belongs to the Fumitory Family, is five to nine inches tall. It blooms in April in rich hilly woods in eastern America. The plant dies down after seeds have ripened. *Dicentra canadensis* is similar but more delicate. The root has small yellow tubers, giving the plant the common name Squirrel Corn.



CLINTONIA or CORN-LILY
Clintonia borealis

This member of the Lily Family produces two or three broad basal leaves and yellowish-green bells on a leafless stalk six to twelve inches in height. It blooms from May to July in cool woods in eastern states from Canada to Georgia. The berries are blue. There is a white variety, *Clintonia umbellulata*. A tight umbel of fragrant flowers, dotted with green and purple appears at the top of a downy stalk, followed by round black berries. Its basal leaves are similar to those of yellow Clintonia.

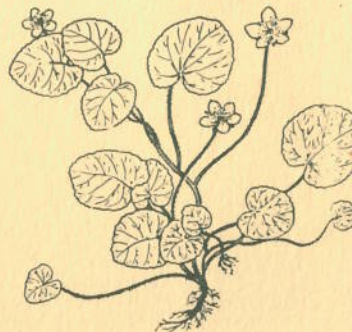
DWARF CRESTED IRIS
Iris cristata

A spreading low plant, five to six inches tall, belonging to the Lily Family, its rhizomes extend at or just beneath the ground surface. It has narrow spike leaves. In May, beautiful lavender flowers appear. It needs partial shade and humusy soil.



DEWDROP
Dalibarda repens

This wild, creeping ground cover, of the Rose Family, is found in moist woods from southern Canada southwards. It has round, finely scalloped leaves and a solitary bushy-stamened flower on a reddish stalk, two to five inches, blooming in the summer.



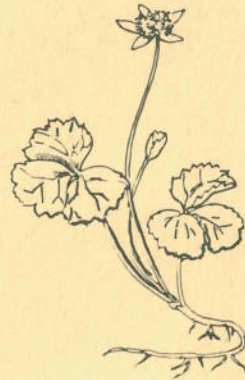
FALSE SOLOMON'S-SEAL
Smilacina racemosa

This plant is similar in growth habits and family characteristics to Solomon's Seal, but the flowers are a terminal plume of creamy white; in the Fall, a cluster of lovely soft red berries. A member of the Lily Family.

FOAMFLOWER

Tiarella cordifolia

Also known as False Miterwort, this charming ground cover, a member of the Saxifrage Family, grows to 12 inches in height, in rich woodlands over a wide range. It produces heart-shaped leaves and, in May, plumes of creamy white star-like flowers. In the Fall, its leaves turn dark red. Similar to it but growing larger to 18 inches, is Bishop's-cap (*Mitella diphylla*). Its tiny white flowers, beautifully fringed, appear on stems above pairs of stalkless leaves.



GOLD THREAD

Coptis Groenlandica

A small woodland plant of the Buttercup family, with shiny, evergreen, three-parted leaves, and a single white flower with five or six early-falling petals. This small evergreen creeps by little yellow roots, in damp mossy woods. It prefers some shade and acid soil.

SHARP-LOBED HEPATICA

Hepatica acutiloba

One of the earliest Spring flowers, of blue, pink or white on downy stems, 4-8 inches high. The semi-evergreen leaves are low and mottled and more pointed than Round-lobed Hepatica (*H. americana*) which is smaller. The leaves of the former may have 5 to 7 lobes, whereas the latter's are three-lobed. This is a woodland plant of the Crowfoot Family, native to eastern America.



HERB-ROBERT

Geranium Robertianum

A woodland plant of the Geranium Family, up to eighteen inches tall, with dainty fern-like leaves. The stems, often reddish, produce small pink flowers, usually paired, from May to October. It has a wide range.

JACK-IN-THE-PULPIT

Arisaema triphyllum

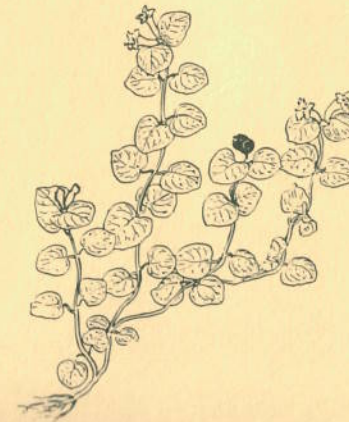
A well-known plant of the Arum Family, grows throughout the United States in moist woods and thickets. "Jack", represented by the spadix, a spike of tiny green flowers, looks out at you from his pulpit, represented by the spathe, or hood, which partially covers it. The spathe is green, striped with brown or purple. Two large three-parted leaves shelter the flower spike. The bloom continues from April to July. In the Fall, the fruit is a cluster of red berries.



PARTRIDGEBERRY

Mitchella repens

One of the Madder Family, Partridgeberry is found in eastern North American woodlands. Its small dark evergreen leaves, often variegated with whitish lines, grow in pairs along rooting stems which cling to ground. In June, pairs of pink buds open to white flowers, which are followed by single red berries in the Fall.



SOLOMON'S-SEAL
Polygonatum biflorum

Of the Lily Family, it grows in colonies in humusy woodland soil, in eastern United States. Its tall stems bend over gracefully, small pendulous bell-like flowers, white with a green band, occur along the stems. It blooms in May.



SWEET ROCKET or DAME'S ROCKET
Hesperis matronalis

This garden escape resembles a phlox, but the flower has four petals rather than five, and long seed pods of the Mustard Family to which it belongs. Its clusters of flowers atop a tall stem are pink, purple or white, very fragrant. It grows in wood edges, roadsides in a broad range of eastern states.

TOOTHWORT
Dentaria diphylla

This delicate plant of the Mustard Family reaches a height of eight to twelve inches. Stems are stout and smooth, with two three-part leaves. White flowers bloom in May. It is found in rich woodlands in north-eastern America. There is a white or pale lavender cut leaf variety (*Dentaria laciniata*).



TRILLIUM — WAKE-ROBIN
Trillium

Belonging to the Lily Family, trilliums or wake-robins derive their generic name from the fact that they have three leaves, three petals, three sepals and a three-parted stigma. Their distinctive flowers, blooming in April and May, are long lasting. They grow best in colonies, in humus-rich soils. Three varieties are the White Trillium (*T. grandiflorum*), the smaller Purple Trillium or Wake-Robin (*T. erectum*), and the Painted Trillium (*T. undulatum*) with red markings on the white petals.

TURK'S-CAP LILY
Lilium superbum

This lily is a highlight of open sunny, undisturbed areas. Its stems grow three to eight feet tall with whorls of leaves at regular intervals. Nodding bell-shaped flowers of orange with green central star and speckling of purple spots, reflexed petals, bloom in mid-summer. Canada Lily (*Lilium canadense*) does not grow as tall as Turk's-cap but has more and smaller flowers per stem.



VIOLET
Viola

There are over fifty species of the Violet Family in Northeastern and North-central United States. Some are deep lilac, others may be yellow, pale lavender or bi-colored. Leaves vary from heart-shaped, finely segmented to arrow-leaved. The Sweet White Violet (*V. blanda*) has small, heart-shaped leaves. Its flowers have five white petals, the lower ones veined. The upper petals are reflexed or twisted. It blooms in April and May in moist meadows and woods and is very fragrant. The Common Blue Violet (*V. papilionacea*) flowers have five deep violet petals, the two laterals bearded and the three lower petals deeply veined.



WILD COLUMBINE
Aquilegia canadensis

A dainty delicate plant of the Crowfoot Family. Red and yellow drooping bells with five long curved spurs develop atop stems one foot tall. Its compound leaves are divided into three's. It blooms from April to July, in rocky woods in eastern states and Canada.



WILD GINGER
Asarum Canadense

Of the Birthwort family, this low plant has two large heart-shaped leaves on long, hairy stems arising from the base. A small bell-shaped flower with three sharply pointed red-brown lobes appears close to the base of the plant in early Spring. It grows in rich woods in Eastern United States.

WILD LILY-OF-THE-VALLEY
Maianthemum canadense

Related to False Solomon's Seal, Clintonia, and similar members of the Lily Family, this small plant, three to six inches, has one stalk of small white four-pointed flowers and two or three leaves with deeply cleft, heart-shaped bases. It blooms from May to July. Its berries are white, later turning pale red. It often forms colonies growing in moist woods, in moderately acid soil in Eastern uplands.



WOOD ANEMONE
Anemone quinquefolia

A low, delicate woods plant, the slender stem is four to eight inches high. Three leaves radiate from a point about two-thirds up, each on a long slender stem, and divided into three to five toothed, ovate leaflets. The single white flower rises on a slender stem at the junction of the leaf stems, with five petal-like sepals, blooming in late Spring. It is native to Eastern Canada and United States.

WINTERGREEN or CHECKERBERRY
Gaultheria procumbens

Thick, shiny oval leaves, slightly fragrant, rise from a creeping stem. Short, erect branches of two to five inches bear small, waxy, egg-shaped flowers which dangle beneath the leaves in midsummer. The fruit is a fragrant red berry. Belonging to the Heath Family, wintergreen is found in woods of Canada, northern states and south in mountains.



WOOD SORREL
Oxalis montana

Basal leaves of inversely heart-shaped, clover-like leaflets grow to three or four inches. Flowers have five pink or white petals, strongly veined with pink. A member of the Wood Sorrel Family, it thrives in rich moist woods from Quebec to southern mountains.

CHRISTMAS FERN

Polystichum acrostichoides

A dark glossy evergreen member of the Polypody Family, of woodland habitat. Its sterile fronds grow twelve to eighteen inches long, while those carrying the fruiting bodies are a little taller.



EVERGREEN WOOD FERN

Dryopteris Intermedia

Deep green. The fronds grow up to 30 inches long when mature. Crown forming and does not spread. New brown scaled fiddle head rises from crown formed the previous season. Evergreen or nearly so. Requires rocky soil, rich in humus, neutral to slightly acid. Deep shade to alternate sunlight and moisture at all times.



LADY FERN

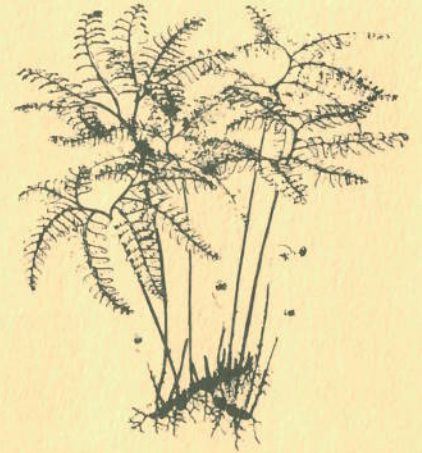
Athyrium Filix-femina

Color differs with age, location and variants, ranging from yellow-green to medium green. Maturing leaves are deeper green with a brownish cast. The length of fronds varies from 18 to 36 inches or more. The fiddle head is different from other ferns being rounded and oblong. Easy to grow requiring neutral to slightly acid soil.

MAIDENHAIR FERN

Adiantum pedatum

Of the Polypody Family, the graceful curving black stems carrying the small leaflets in a wreath or horseshoe effect rise to a height of one to two feet. It has a wide range in woodlands of North America.



OSTRICH FERN

Matteuccia pensylvanica

A large handsome member of the Polypody Family, it is found in wet swampy situations in light shade or sun. The sterile fronds grow up from the black, flaky rootstock, forming graceful circles in the centers of which are the brown fertile fronds.

ROYAL FERN

Osmunda regalis var. spectabilis

Light reddish green when young, changing to deep green. The plant lacks the delicate leaf pattern common to many ferns. It is 3 to 4 feet high, 6 feet under ideal conditions. Requires highly acid, very wet soil and some sunlight.



THE HIDDEN VERTUE

" -- The delight is great, but the use is greater, and joynd often with necessitie. The hidden vertue -- is such that (as Pliny noteth) the very bruit beasts have found it out --- "

Gerard's Herball

Wildflowers have always been a *source of delight*, but *understanding how to use them* no longer has the same sense of urgency that was felt by John Gerard when he wrote his famous Herball in 1597 or that prevailed for the mid-nineteenth century household. Such understanding could help to resolve any number of household needs and nuisances, depending upon resourcefulness or ingenuity of use.

The 1850s were a time when people were aware of how dependent they were on their immediate environment. It was a time when the experience of previous generations was listened to and learned from, motivating a familiarity with the plant material most easily available in the nearby fields and woods or in the 'kitchen garden'. The fact that 'a freshly sliced onion if placed upon a wasp sting taketh away the pain and swelling' was common knowledge. So, too, was the observation that 'the juice of jewel weed, if applied, will relieve the discomfort caused by poison ivy'. It was a time when useful bits of information were instinctively stored away in 'house books' and cook books, much the way bits of lace and odd pieces of material were tucked away in boxes or trunks, pending that moment when they might come in handy.

The realities of day to day living in 1852 are felt by reading Miss Catherine Beecher's advice to 'Young Ladies at Home and at School':

" -- Every woman who has care of a young child or a large family is frequently called upon to advise what shall be done for someone who is indisposed, and often in circumstances when she must trust solely to her own judgment --- "

Treatise on Domestic Economy
3rd Edition pub. 1852

The gamut of suitable remedies included learning how to take advantage of the 'hidden vertues' known to exist in certain plants. The most usual procedure was to prepare extracts or 'decoctions' for internal or external use. This meant learning which part of the plant to steep in boiling water. The strength of the dosage was critical to success, since too strong a dosage might prove to be fatal. For this reason, experiments with herbal medicine by novices should be discouraged without advice from a pharmacist or physician.

The wildflowers now growing in the Dark Aisle typify the plants which would have been found in the 1850s growing under similar conditions. Their 'hidden vertues' are many. A sampling of the information that has been researched shows that their known uses fit into these broad cate-

medicinal (both internal and external) —

Digestion was aided, disorders soothed and pains relieved by teas and extracts made from the roots and/or leaves of most of the wildflowers in the Dark Aisle. Among them were Adder's Tongue (emetic), Black Snakeroot (narcotic), Bloodroot (digestion), Celandine (drastic purge), Herb Robert (hemorrhages), Partridge Berry (diuretic), White Trillium (diarrhea). A tonic made from the roots of Gold Thread and Gold Seal was used as a therapy for alcoholics. Perhaps in the realm of legend was the thought that a happy marriage could be assured if both bride and groom had eaten myrtle leaves! Of particular interest is the fact that the berries of False Solomon's Seal are high in Vitamin C. Whether the early colonists were aware of their vitamin content or not, they knew that the berries were effective in preventing scurvy and for this reason False Solomon's Seal was known for a long time as Scurvy Berry.

Insect bites, sores and bruises were relieved by poultices made of crushed leaves or the boiled roots of White Trillium, False Solomon's Seal or Live Forever. False Solomon's Seal also made a caustic which reduced warts.

culinary — These were considered gourmet treats: the tiny yellow bulbs of Squirrel Corn or Dutchman's Breeches, the spring fiddle heads of Ostrich Fern, the roots of Indian Cucumber, the dried bulbs of Turk's Cap Lily, and the fruits of Wood Strawberry and of Elderberry. Wood Sorrel leaves made a lively salad.

dyes — Dyes were extracted from Bloodroot (melon color), Celandine (yellow), Wild Lily of the Valley (greenish yellow to gold), and Wood Sorrel (red).

multiple uses — Oil of Wintergreen was popular in domestic medicine as an astringent, a diuretic or a stimulant. The dried leaves could be used as a substitute for aspirin or a poultice of leaves could be used for insect bites. Oil from the leaves was a favorite flavoring and the berries and young leaves could be eaten either cooked or raw. Violets also ran the gamut of uses; their flowers could be candied, their roots dried and stored for winter use, a tea of violet leaves believed to induce sleep, a syrup of violets delicious on porridge or puddings, and also used as a remedy for bronchitis or asthma. Sweet Woodruff not only was a favorite flavoring for May Wine but also was known to discourage insects in the linen closet if dried.

ingenious uses — Some people thought to turn the stout thorns of the Hawthorns into fishhooks or the hollow stems of Elderberry into flutes.

This sampling of the 'hidden vertues' within the Dark Aisle perhaps may add a new dimension for those who come to Lorenzo and find its wildflowers a source of delight.

FLOWERING HINTS

Seasons vary from year to year but the flowering sequence stays the same. Start looking for these flowers in

very early spring:

Hepatica
Adder's tongue

Bloodroot
Trillium & Wake-Robin

early spring:

Violets
Toothwort
Forget-me-not
Jack-in-the-pulpit

Virginia bluebell
Dutchman's-breeches
Myrtle
Pachysandra

spring:

Lily-of-the-valley
Foamflower
Wild Ginger

Solomon's-seal
Bishop's cap

late spring:

Clintonia
Sweet Woodruff
Rue anemone
Herb-Robert
Dwarf crested iris
Bunchberry

False Solomon's-seal
Wild lily-of-the-valley
Indian cucumber root
Baneberry
Goldthread
Sweet rocket

early summer:

Wild strawberry
Columbine
Virginia waterleaf
Wind flower

Wood sorrel
Celandine
Wild blue phlox

summer:

Native lilies
Dewdrop
Wintergreen
Cardinal flower

Goat's beard
Black snakeroot
Partridgeberry
Jewelweed

For the preparation of its booklet, The Syracuse Garden Club has used, as references, and adapted materials from, the following:

"Common Wild Flowers of New York State"
by Patricia Ellison

"A Field Guide to Wildflowers of Northeastern and North-central North America"
by Roger Tory Peterson and Margaret McKenny

"Flower Guide — Wild Flowers East of the Rockies"
by Chester A. Reed

"Gray's Manual of Botany — Eighth Edition"
by Merritt Lyndon Fernald

"A Guide to the Will C. Curtis Garden in the Woods"
written by Viki Ferreniea
with the permission of the New England Wild Flower Society, Inc.

"Hortus III, A Concise Dictionary of Plants Cultivated in the United States and Canada"
initially compiled by Liberty Hyde Bailey and Ethel Zoe Bailey — Revised and expanded by the Staff of the Liberty Hyde Bailey Hortorium, Ithaca, New York

"How To Know the Wild Flowers"
by Mrs. William S. Dana

"New Britton and Brown Illustrated Flora of the Northeastern United States and Adjacent Canada"
by Henry A. Gleason

"Wild Flower Guide"
by Edgar T. Wherry

"Handbook of Wildflower Cultivation"
by Kathryn S. Taylor and Stephen S. Hamblin

"Earth Medicines — Earth Foods"
by Michael A. Weiner

"A Field Guide to the Ferns"
by Boughton Cobb

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