

Wildflowers

THE BULLETIN OF THE
BOTANICAL SOCIETY OF W. PA.

MARCH MEETING

Our next meeting will be Monday, March 14, at 8:00 P.M., at Trinity Hall on the Carlow Campus, 3333 Fifth Ave., Oakland.

The program -

"The West in Springtime"
Chuck and Marian Hissem

Whenever the Hissems give a program, you can count on prize-winning photography.



BETTE G. BRUESCHKE

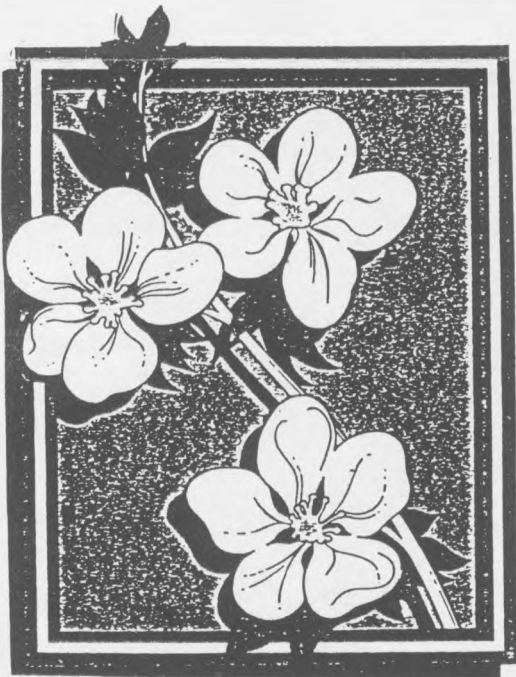
Our member, Bette G. Brueschke, died on the 12th of February. The Botanical Society extends its deepest sympathy to her husband, Herbert P. Brueschke.



WILDFLOWER COURSE AT C.C.A.C.

A non-credit course, "Wildflowers of Spring", is being offered by Allegheny County Community College. There will be 5 sessions, Saturdays from 9 A.M. to noon, beginning April 2.

The course will consist of an introductory classroom session - at Vincentian High School - to acquaint students with field guides and their use, plant characteristics to look for in field identification, habitats, etc. Following the introductory session there will be field trips to such natural areas as North Park, Trillium Trail, Raccoon Creek Wildflower Reserve, and others.



The fee for Allegheny County residents is \$19, payable to -

Office of Continuing Education
College Center-North
1130 Perry Highway
Pittsburgh, PA 15237

Registration deadline is March 22, 1988.

Now, we have saved the best for last. The instructor for this course is our own Esther Allen!



ATLAS OF THE FLORA OF PENNSYLVANIA

This book by Wherry, Fogg, and Wahl, showing the location of Pennsylvania plants by counties, is again available.

The cost is only \$5.00 plus \$2.74 postage, which should be sent to --

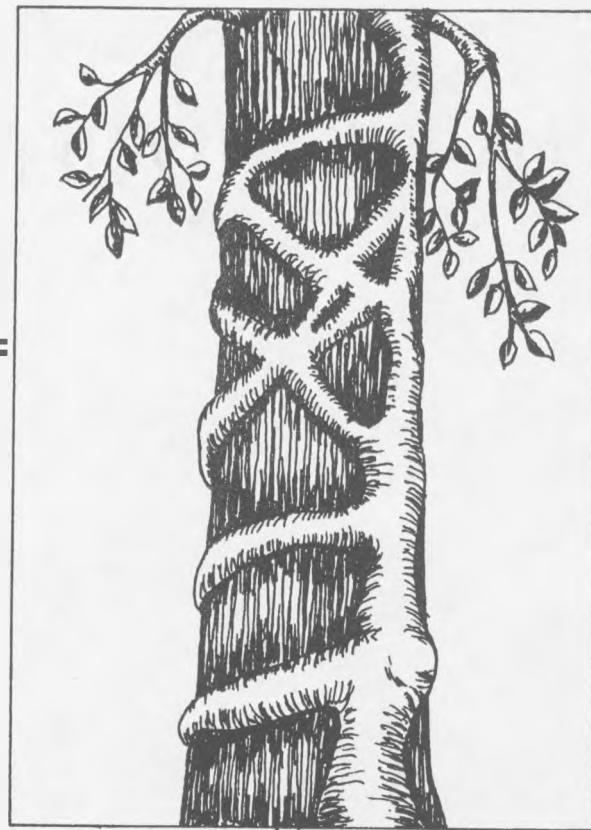
Morris Arboretum of the
University of Pennsylvania
9414 Meadowbrook Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 19118

Note: I happen to have one extra copy of this Atlas. I'll bring it to the March meeting.

Robert F. Bahl, Secretary
401 Clearview Ave.
Pittsburgh, PA 15205
(412)921-1797

MARCH 1988

Our 102nd Year



FICUS AUREA

This is a reproduction of a photograph of a Strangler Fig (*Ficus aurea*) which was growing in 1987 in the Fakahatchee Strand of the Big Cypress Bend, a state preserve in the Florida Everglades.

This killer fig usually sends its rope-like coils around the Baldcypress (*Taxodium distichum*). It is called "bald" because it sheds its leaves each autumn, but in March produces lace-like leaves. The cypress is a large tree whose wood has great commercial value.

The fig tree grows rapidly, supported by the trunk of the Baldcypress, and produces a crown with broad shiny leaves shading out the sun from the host tree as it chokes it. When the host tree finally dies, the fig tree is large enough to stand alone.



- Dorothy Seif

PETERSON FIELD GUIDE TO MUSHROOMS by McKnight

About a dozen years ago when my interest in these fungi began to stir, there were few books available. One was Krieger's THE MUSHROOM HANDBOOK first published in 1935 with information dating to the turn-of-the-century. Loaded with facts, Krieger's book approached the problem of edibility from the standpoint of the "many" good kinds and the very "few" dangerous mushrooms. Thus, by learning those which were edible and easy to identify, the enthusiast was rather safe. Smith's THE MUSHROOM HUNTER'S FIELD GUIDE gave rather short, one-sentence comments on edibility. Graham's MUSHROOMS OF THE GREAT LAKES REGION had practically nothing about edibility although the book covered, with fine sketches, 1200 species. Collins' GUIDE TO MUSHROOMS AND TOADSTOOLS by Lange and Hora, published in Great Britain, does caution the mycophile with such phrases as: "good to excellent...as a main dish...useful...worthless...unpleasant...and deadly poisonous." Miller's MUSHROOMS OF NORTH AMERICA gives an extensive presentation of the chemical toxins found in dangerous varieties. This information was not obtainable before modern methods of analysis of chemical structures.

McKnight and McKnight warn readers extensively concerning the dangers of mushroom poisoning. These warnings are expressed in the introduction, before the plates, and in the description and text. The reader is left with no doubt of the dangers of indiscriminate eating of fungi. The authors state they assume no "responsibility for the consequences of readers" not heeding their warnings. To make the problem even clearer, symbols such as "edible for most people," "not recommended," and "Poisonous" are included.

McKnight's is probably the first of many modern texts which will approach mushroom edibility from a different standpoint. The book hints at our developing knowledge of how chemicals affect our bodies. It might be said that everyone is allergic to something, even aspirin. Constant references are made to the toxicity of some mushrooms to some people. Thus, we are reminded of synergism of drugs. Numerous statements suggest to the reader the importance of taking only small amounts of the mushroom so its effects may be found by each person. As more and more persons have poor experiences with so-called "safe" fungi, we may see more warnings and fewer "choice" mushrooms. We may come full-circle from Krieger's idea of "many" good kinds and the "few" poisonous fungi.

- Carl M. Patsche, Weirton, W. Va.