FLOWERS and GARDENS of the CENTRAL CITY REGION

50¢

The Green Thumb
Tier upon tier the streets of Central City perch on the mountain sides, some close to the mines and some leading to the heart of town, close to the Opera House, the Teller House, and the Masonic Lodge. Houses with new coats of paint stand next to decaying structures with a past. Wander past foundations which once held stamp mills, whose deafening noise was a welcome sound in boom days. Or pick your way carefully at night over broken wooden sidewalks, your footsteps unnaturally loud as they echo against empty plaster walls and brick ruins of stores and saloons.

Walk the streets today, but live in the city’s past. Then you will thrill to its houses, which are rattling shells of gentility, with lacylike ornament on the porches and Gothic windows in the gables. Climb the narrow, musty stairs to the newspaper office where a veteran editor once typed editorials amidst papers and books, the accumulation of years.

Soon you will not see the bleached wood and broken shutters, the peeling plaster and the festoons of wallpaper fluttering from ceilings as a stiff mountain breeze whistles through the eaves; but you will see, instead, the ambitions and undying faith of the people who built this community and whose descendants will tell you that “It’s not a ghost town. It will come back.” And you will believe them because they believe themselves.

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The Colorado Forestry and Horticulture Association has assembled here for the pleasure and information of visitors to Central City, descriptions and illustrations of plant life found in the area. Four leading authorities on horticulture in the state have cooperated in the preparation of this material. They have each presented a different phase of the subject.

1. The native vegetation as it was before the coming of the miners.
2. The evolution of the interest in gardens, trees, and lawns, as the community grew and matured.
3. The Opera House garden. Early attempts and present design.
4. The possibilities for developing and preserving natural beauties in this and other similar communities.

The wide range of altitudes and soils in Colorado makes the area one of special interest horticulturally. The native varieties of beautiful and rare trees, plants and flowers are innumerable. Through the planned use of local plant material, there are great, though as yet mostly unrecognized, possibilities for groups of interested citizens, at small cost, to beautify and make more livable their communities.

The Colorado Forestry and Horticulture Association was organized to encourage the development and preservation of horticultural values throughout the state, and makes available correct information on native plants and their uses. The Association hopes that every visitor to Central City will enjoy this handbook of plant material of that area.

GLADYS C. EVANS, (Mrs. John Evans) President.
The sun slipped down from trembling leaf to leaf and touched lightly the Blue Columbine swaying in the breeze against the white trunk of the Aspen. It passed on, down the slope, and briefly found out white-flowered Dotted Saxifrage and Fragile Fern clinging to the side of a rocky outcrop. It lighted up, in passing, the heavy green mats of Kinnikinnick with fairy washing hung out to dry among shining green leaves. It peeped shyly through the soft dark green branches of Douglas Fir and the stiff bluish-green of Spruce to rest for a moment on the forest duff among a colony of pink-flowered Pyrota.

It skimmed gaily along the tumbling clear stream, making rainbows of the splashing drops, and on a grassy knoll paused to admire its own glory reflected from the upturned cup of the Wood Lily. Then hurrying on and upstream, past Little Red Elephants and Blue-Eyed Grass and Shooting Stars making beauty of the marshy hummocks, to an open meadow where sun and wind together danced a minuet among the swinging Bluebells.

For it was summer. The summer before the cry of "Gold!" had echoed back and forth from hill to hill, and in this great amphitheater of the Rockies a world lay waiting its destiny. To the future belonged the names of Gregory Diggings, of Eureka Gulch, of Central City. Now Nature—the sun, the wind, the stars, the rain, were supreme. Paintbrush and Sulphur Flower, Wild Rose and Mountain Spray, Foxtail Pine and Narrow-leaf Cottonwood all hastened to perfect their pattern of bloom and ripening seed, the age-old pattern of adding generation to generation to insure the future.

This same sun of the summer season had valiantly pushed back the snows of winter to warm the beaten gray grass of the hillsides again to life-giving green. It had swelled the buds of Aspen and Cottonwood, of Rocky Mountain Maple and of Willow to lay a misty green mantle over the slopes against the darker green of the Conifers. It had awakened the Mountain Alder and Birch along the stream. It had stood by to encourage the first Easter Daisy to open its white, pink-tinted flower. It had called forth the dancing Buttercups, the Erigerons, the Snow Saxifrage, and gently whispered to the gray-green rosettes of Lesquerella that spring had come.

It stroked the pussy-furred buds of Pasque Flower into open lavender cups to make a glory of every open nook and cranny. It brought the sap up in the Rock Pine and the Cedar to form...
their cones, the one so large, the other a mere berry. It told the Lodgepole Pine it was time to put on girth and to set out new cones among its old. As it climbed ever higher in the sky, it brought to the Mountain Mahogany the most inconspicuous of blossoms; to the Western Thimbleberry, a large and beautiful rose-like bloom of purest white; to the Low Ninebark and New Jersey Tea, sprays of white flowers; to the Jamesia, a waxen white bloom. It settled a crown of bright pink on the Pincushion Cactus and gave to the Holly Grape a yellow bouquet. It hung harry, deep purple-blue bells on the Bush Clematis, and dainty pink buds and fragile bells of sky blue on the Mertensias.

In a shaded deep ravine, where a Douglas Fir lay prone, the late spring sun sought and found the dainty Fairy Slipper Orchid. It gently caressed the rounded leaves of the trailing Linnaea, whose twin perfect bells it would find again later in the season. It lingered among the tender new growth of Elderberry, of Involucred Honey suckle, and stroked the scaly bark of the Canada Buffalo Berry branches.

Out of the earth the sun of spring brought forth the summer and autumn blooming plants of these hillsides, meadows and ravines. There came at its call the blue and the pink flowered Pentstemons in wide variety, the Golden Banner, the Mariposa Lily, the Twisted Stalk and False Solomon's Seal, Violets blue and white and yellow, Lady's Bedstraw and Anemones, Vinegar's Candle, Fireweed, big Green Gentian, little Love Gentian, and the blue, blue Gentians of autumn, Jacob's Ladder, huge Cow Parsnip of the streamside, Pretty Puccoon, forget-me-not blue Stickseed, Prickly Cactus, Dandelions, Senecios, Machaeranthes, Frigerons and Asters by the dozens of kinds and species. All of these, and more, came to fill the amphitheater where one day Central City would hold the stage, where men brave and strong and men weak of will would foregather at the cry of Gold! to find fortune, to settle and build homes, to know heartbreak and pass on, but each to leave the imprint of his footsteps on rocky slope, on grassy meadow, beside stream and on wooded hillside.

But now only the sun of summer looked with favor on Columbine against Aspen trunks. It struck a glow from the golden flowered Arnica, danced among the leaves of Meadow-rue, lit up the white plume of the Baneberry flower, touched the Wand Lily, held for a moment the silken-texture of the petals of Virgin's Bower. Out on the hot grassy slope it flashed from the magenta flowered Lambert's Superb Balsam and the dazzling flaring flower of the Canada Lovage against the blue sky; from the golden flowered Alaska Arnica, whose twin perfect bells it would find again later in the season. It lingered at the entrance to the mountain flower garden of the Monarch, for a season the Canada Buffaloberry branches, whose twin perfect bells it would find again later in the season.
the dominance of Sunflower, Goldenrod, Hawksbeard and Senecio, with here and there a touch of blue and white from late blooming Asters and Engerons and Machaeranthus.

So the sun of summer changed to the sun of autumn, with days growing shorter, nights of frosty cold, and the sun itself reflected from the golden and orange leaves of the Aspens, the gold and red of the Maple, the Elder, the Wild Rose, the Chokecherry, the Jonnia. Deep in shaded spots the Berberis carried aloft its waxen red berries, beautiful in modeling but not for eating. The Honeysuckle set out twin black berries in deep red involucres. Under the sun the spiny berries of Wild Raspberry and the seedy berries of Thimbleberry alike ripened and dropped to the ground. Rose hips of brilliant hue nodded in the fall breeze, and the Holly Grape exchanged its yellow bouquet for clusters of grape-like fruits. Mountain Mahogany became a plumed knight. And over the marshy bismocks and the meadow spread a blue mantle of Gentians.

Thus ended the season of growth of bloom, of fruit. Golden Aspen leaves dropped down to blanket the Columbine, the Meadow rue, the Golden Banner; the sun shone on bare branches. The Pines, the Spruce, the Cedars drew into themselves, and each a little closer to its neighbor; for they alone seemed to hold a vestige of life. Snow covered the Paintbrush and the Loco, the Bluebells and the Shooting Stars. This little world high in the Rockies was almost done with waiting — waiting for the coming of the miner with his cry of "Gold!"

Below, Douglas Fir

Conspicuous Plants to Look For in the Central City Area

List Compiled by Mark and Claire Norton

Names used here by the authors are those with which most Colorado botanists are familiar. Names in parentheses are those recommended by "Standardized Plant Names." Editor.

TREES

Bristlecone Pine (Foxtail Pine) Pinus aristata
Limber Pine Pinus flexilis
Western Yellow Pine (Ponderosa Pine) Pinus ponderosa
Lodgepole Pine Pinus contorta var. latifolia
Blue Spruce, Silver Spruce (Colorado Spruce) Picea pungens
Englemann Spruce Picea engelmannii
(Common) Douglas fir Pseudotsuga taxifolia
Rocky Mountain Juniper Juniperus scopulorum
Dwarf Juniper (Common Juniper) Juniperus communis var. montana
Narrowleaf Cottonwood (Poplar) Populus angustifolia
Quaking Aspen Populus tremuloides

SHRUBS

Rocky Mountain Birch (Water Birch) Betula fontinalis
Mountain Alder (Thimble Alder) Alnus tenuifolia
Willows Salix spp.
Common Shad (Dwarf Serviceberry) Amelanchier spicata
Western Chokecherry Prunus mälanocarpa (P. virginiana demissas)

A. ROCKY MOUNTAIN JUNIPER
B. MOUNTAIN COMMON JUNIPER

(From Colorado Envyverna, by Robert E. More)
Rocky Mountain Maple
Acer glabrum
Red Currant, Squaw Currant (Wax Currant)
Ribes cereum
(True) Mountain Mahogany
Cercocarpus parvifolius (C. montanus)
Mountain Spray (Bush Rockspirea)
Holodiscus dumosus
Western Thimbleberry (Boulder Raspberry)
Bosseika deliciosa (Rubus deliciosa)
(Redosier) Dogwood
Cornus stolonifera
Involucres (Bearberry) Honeysuckle
Lonicerina involucrata
Elderberry (Bunchberry Elder)
Sambucus microbotrys
Yucca (Small Soapweed)
Yucca glauca
Gooseberry
Ribes spp.
(Cliff) Jamesia
Jamesia americana
Low Ninebark (Mountain Ninebark)
Physocarpus monogynus
Shrubby (Bush) Cinquefoil
Dasiphora fruticosa (Potentilla fruticosa)
Wild Rose
Rosa spp.
New Jersey Tea (Fendler Ceanothus)
Ceanothus fendleri
Canada (Russet) Buffaloberry
Shepherdia canadensis
Snowberry
Symphoricarpos spp.
Sagebrush
Artemisia spp.
Rabbitbrush
Chrysothamnus spp.
Holly Grape (Creeping Mahonia)
Mahonia repens
Kinnikinnick (Bearberry)
Arctostaphylos uva ursi
Bilberry
Vaccinium spp.
Prickly Pear (Cactus)
Opuntia spp.
Pincushion Cactus
Echinocactus simsoni
Fragile Fern (Brittle Bladerfern)
Filix fragilis (Cystopteris fragilis)
Woodia
Woodia spp.
Selaginella
Selaginella spp.
(Western) Virginia's Bower
Clematis occidentalis (C. ligusticifolia)
Buttercup
Ranunculus spp.
Meadow rue
Thalictrum spp.
Prickly Poppy (Pricklepoppy)
Argemone intermedia
Golden Smoke (Golden corydalis)
Corydalis aurea
Candytuft (Blue Pennycress)
Corydalis coloradensis (T. glaucum)
Bittercress (Heartleaf Bittercress)
Cardamine cordifolia
Bladder Pod
Physaria and Lesquerella
Draba
Draba spp.
Western Wallflower (Plains Erysimum)
Erysimum asperum
Colorado Beeplant (Bee Spiderflower)
Cleome serrulata
Stonecrop (Wormleaf Stonecrop)
Sedum stenopetalum
Alumroot
Heuchera spp.
Dotted Saxifrage (Yellowdot Saxifrage)
Saxifraga austromontana
Snow Saxifrage (Diamondleaf Saxifrage)
Saxifraga rhomboidea
Strawberry
Fragaria spp.
Cinquefoil
Potentilla spp.
Pink Plumes (Prairie smoke Sieversia)
Sieversia ciliata
Golden Banner (Thermopsis)
Thermopsis spp.
Lupine
Lupinus spp.
Loco
Aragallis spp. (Astragalus spp.)
Cranesbill (Geranium)
Geranium spp.
Storkbill (Alfilieta)
Erodium cicutarium (Levis) Flax
Linum lewisii
Violets
Viola spp.

Photos from Meet the Nativity

Fireweed
Chamaenerion angustifolium (Epilobium angustifolium)
White (Tufted) Evening Primrose
Pachyphlus macroglottis (Oenothera caespitosa)
(Common) Cow Parsnip
Heracleum lanatum
Wintergreen (Pyrola)
Pyrola spp.
Shooting Star (Darkthroat Shootingstar)
Dodecatheon pauciflorum
Rocky Mountain Fringed Gentian
Gentiana elegans (G. thermalis)
Perennial Fringed Gentian
Gentiana barbellata
Love Gentian (New World Annual Gentian)
Gentiana plebeja (G. plebeia)
Green Gentian (Rocky Mountain Swertia)
Swertia radiata (S. scopulina)
Phlox
Phlox spp.
Gilia
Gilia spp.
Fairy Trumpets (Skyrocket Gilia)
Gilia aggregata
Jacob's Ladder (Polemonium)
Polemonium spp.
Waterleaf
Hydrophyllum spp.
Phacelia
Phacelia spp.
Miner's Candle (Cryptantha)
Oreocarya virgata (Cryptantha spp.)
Bluebells
Mertensia spp.
Puccoon (Gromwell)
Lithospermum spp.
Horsemint (Mintleaf Beebalm)
Monarda menthaefolia
(Penstemon) Beardtongue
Penstemon spp.
Lousewort (Pedicularis)
Pedicularis spp.
Little Red Elephants (Elephanthead pedicularis)
Elephantella groenlandica (Pedicularis groenlandica)
Paintbrush (Paintedcup)
Castilleja spp.
Lady's Bedstraw (Northern Bedstraw)
Galium boreale
Harebell (Bluebells)
Campanula rotundifolia

Photos from Meet the Nativity

ABOVE—KINNIKINNICK
BELOW—SPRING BEAUTY

SNOWBALL SAXIFRAGE

ABOVE—MARIPOSA
BELOW—CANADA VIOLET
Valerian
  Valeriana spp.
Gum Plant (Gumweed)
Grindelia spp.
Golden Aster (Goldaster)
Chrysopsis spp.
Actinella (Actinea)
Actinella spp. (Actinea spp.)
Goldenrod
Solidago spp.
Easter Daisy (Stemless Townsendia)
Townsendia exscapa
Aster
Aster spp.
Kitten Toes (Pussytoes)
Antennaria spp.
Blackeyed susan
Rudbeckia hirta
Sunflower
Helianthus and Helianthella
(Common Perennial) Gaillardia
Gaillardia aristata
(Common) Yarrow
Achillea millefolium
Arnica (Heartleaf Arnica)
Arnica cordifolia
Senecio (Groundsel)
Senecio spp.
People who built Central City came primarily for the chance to make a fortune from its fabulous mines. Their first log cabins, put up in the early sixties, were merely shelters from the wind and rain and from the winter cold. Later, as the community became more stable and graceful houses began to take the place of temporary shacks and cabins, men built, tier on tier, the retaining walls which held back the soil and which gave to the city that stability and security which impress the visitor even today.

But where the activities of men had destroyed the natural covering of the soil, the land was bare, and early visitors to Central City remarked on the hideousness of the immediate surroundings. However, no matter how offensive to the eye the barren and broken soil around the houses, lawns and gardens were impossible to grow because of the shortage of water. In the early days, water was obtained from springs and wells which were owned by individuals. Harry H. Lake, son of Central City pioneers, tells of how in those days his mother used to use a sprinkling can filled with water from her well to keep alive a row of sweet peas. A few hardy families, accustomed to the luxuriant green of the East, tried to grow lawns, but such projects were so expensive in both water and energy that they were given up. The Teller family, whose house stood on the present site of the Court House, partially solved the problem by using native bunch grass from the surrounding hillsides as a ground cover. As no attempt was made to cut it, the grass grew tall and luxuriant around the house.

Two shrubs, by far the most famous of the plant life of Central City, were introduced during these early years. The Harison yellow roses, which have “taken” all the crevices and garden edges of the town and which hang in yellow splendor over the retaining walls in early summer, are offspring of a single bush planted in the early sixties by the family of Henry M. Teller, builder of the Teller House, who later became United States Senator from Colorado. No one knows the place from which this first Harison rose was brought. Some say Texas; others, the Middle West. The lilacs, which have also spread over the town, were first imported and planted in 1875 by Abraham Rachofsky, a Gilpin County pioneer, beside the small green and white house to which he took his young wife, Etta Cohen. This house, built between the Methodist Church and the Court House, is still standing. Here the lilacs flourished and grew so luxuriantly that for many years they were recognized as one of the “sights” of the scarred and barren little town.

As the mining activities became more extensive, however, the local springs and wells gave out; and water for domestic purposes was peddled from house to house at seventy-five and later at fifty cents a barrel. If anyone hoped for cultivated plants, he had to depend on sporadic rain or, in time of drought, on whatever water could be carried in a sprinkling can.

Trees had already been brought into the town in the very early days. The settlers, not content with the scrubby little aspens (Populus tremuloides) which were native to the ravines of Central City, went to the Fall River country and from a distance of four or five miles carried in by hand seedlings of the narrow-leaf cottonwood (Populus angustifolia) which grows along the creek beds in that region. These trees have done well in Central City. Some broad-leaf cottonwoods (Populus Sargentii) were brought up from the plains region where they are native. These too have prospered. It is interesting to note what little use was made of the native evergreens as ornamental or ground cover.

Because of the scarcity of water, many women grew plants indoors. An item in The Central City Weekly Register-Call in 1881 mentions the large collection of house plants at the residence of Mrs. Henry Bolchoff on High Street and boasts of her oleander “which for beauty could not be excelled in the state.” A photograph of the Teller House conservatory, which was housed in the upper balconies of the court, shows a collection of geraniums, rubber plants, ivy, wandering Jew, and other rather common plants, along with tubs of oleanders.

It was not until the water mains of the city were completed in 1886 that any serious attempts were made to have gardens and lawns. By that time the characteristic buildings of the city that mark its cultural growth were already standing: the school house (1870), St. James Methodist Church (1872), the Teller House (1872), St. Paul’s Episcopal Church (1873), and the Opera House (1878). By that time, too, whatever top soil may have been available for the nourishing of garden plants had, long ago, been washed down the steep hillsides. Not even the retaining walls could hold the thin layer of loam which came from what little native growth was left. Accordingly, any gardeners in Central City were faced with the necessity of bringing in rich soil from the edges of the creeks or from the floor of aspen forests where the richest humus can be found. This meant that gardening in Central City was still a problem demanding an expenditure of time and energy and real devotion.

In spite of the trouble and care, lawns began to appear, shrubs were
LOOKING DOWN ON CENTRAL CITY FROM THE HIGH ROAD
extensively planted, especially yellow roses, lilacs, and honesuckle, and gardens were edged in irises, pansies, cosmos, sweet peas, nasturtiums, poppies, and native columbines.

Although the end of the old century and the beginning of the new saw a slowing up in the production of the mines and an extensive exodus of the people from the whole of Gilpin County to the cities of the plains, especially Denver, there still remained in Central City enough families to keep alive some of the traditions of cosmopolitan living and to keep many of the gardens that had been made possible through the city water supply. Once in a while there came to the town people who stirred anew the sense of destiny that had once characterized the community. Such were the Henry Lowes, who went to Central City from Denver in 1909 to make their home. They brought with them certain traditions of elegance which were expressed in many ways, but especially in the creation of a garden which was designed by a professional landscape gardener. The soil, brought in from the creek beds, was held in place by retaining walls. The garden was laid out with summer house, surrounding walls, and fence, and small paths between the beds where irises, peonies, delphinium, golden glow, dahlias, phlox, gladioli, and similar plants grew. Of romantic interest are the twelve rare hybrid roses which flourished in this garden thirty-seven years ago. They were brought by Mrs. Lowe from her garden in Denver in spite of the warnings of her friends that hybrid roses would not do well in Central City. Contrary to all expectations, they lived and blossomed the first summer. It was well that they did, for they were Luxembourg hybrid roses that had been sent from Paris as a special gift to the Lowes by Alexis Braesswe, the greatest French criminal lawyer of his time, in appreciation of his days in Denver as their guest.

Several years later the Lowes moved across the street from their first home in Central City. Here Mrs. Lowe still lives, and here she has fashioned a little “English” garden which lies between the rear wall of her house and a wall about nine feet distant which keeps back the flood waters of the flume. Upon a base of rock and sand, rich black earth was filled in to a depth of several feet. In this small area, about nine by fifteen feet, Mrs. Lowe has developed one of the loveliest gardens in Central City. Here grow spring bulbs—tulips, narcissus, and daffodils, irises, and violets. As summer comes, the oriental poppies bloom, along with pansies, violas, regal lilies, delphiniums, and Iceland poppies. In early summer the Cecil Brunner roses are especially fine. Golden glow, lace vine, calendulas, and other fall flowers flourish until frost. The photograph shows how well Mrs. Lowe has used bird bath and trellis in so small a space. When one asks Mrs. Lowe how she knows which flowers do well in the eight-thousand-five-hundred foot elevation of the town, she answers that one knows only by experimenting over the years.

Another experimentalist in the field of growing gardens in Central City is Mrs. Harry H. Lake, who has been able to maintain a rose garden by setting out two-year-old plants each year during the latter part of May. These bloom luxuriantly, in a well-fertilized loam, during the summer, especially if the nights are not too cool. In winter the plants usually die from the cold and drought of the high altitude, and in the spring new plants must be set out again.

More recently, with the rebirth of Central City through the summer festivals of the Opera House Association, the gardens of the town are showing new life. As many of the houses are

RIGHT, GARDEN OF MRS. HENRY P. LOWE

Photo by R. R. Newbury
once again claimed by the descendants of their original owners or are purchased by enthusiasts new to the region, attention is given not only to refurbishing the dwellings, but also to the development of lawns and gardens. Rock work, so well begun by the pioneers eighty years ago, continues to serve in the cause of holding the soil and in dealing with the difficult nature of the terrain.

Two gardens show particularly well this imaginative treatment in which the natural beauty of slope and occasional outcroppings of lichenized granite are utilized in the design. One of these is that planned and developed by Mrs. James Macfarlane for her house on Eureka Street which she has recently sold to Mr. and Mrs. Bert Shobert. Here a green lawn, edged on three sides by perennial flower beds, runs to the base of a rocky hillside where soil is held by a low retaining wall to form a flower bed. Here plants bloom against the background of natural rock. Mrs. Macfarlane, working with a rich soil of peat moss and leaf mold, has managed to utilize in the most pleasing ways both the flowers of the hills and ravines and those introduced from cultivation. Penstemon, Lupine, bluebell, and columbine bloom with iris, violas, pansies, sweet William, oriental poppies, delphinium, nicotiana, phlox, and peonies. Ground cover of perennial sedum is abundantly used. In the beds held by retaining walls and in the crevices of the rocks above are yellow and pink stone crop, shrubby cinquefoil, moss pink, and saxifrage. Everywhere native shrubs and evergreens are encouraged to grow along the rocky hillside that forms the backdrop for house and garden.

The second garden is located far up the steep road which leads to the Freedom dump. It was laid out by May Martin, who has since sold the house and grounds to an enthusiastic family of Evanston, Illinois. Here again extensive use is made of rock terracing which rises in five or six wide tiers behind the house and up the hillside to a road which follows where a small tram used to haul ore from the mine to the mills. A watering system enables the gardener to care for the entire area with ease. Here are lupine, columbine, phlox, tulips, pansies, larkspur, hollyhocks, raspberry, rosemary, and mint.

These are but two of the many gardens which bloom in Central City. Newcomers and natives alike continue to struggle against poor soil, steep slopes, and winter winds to provide that sense of permanency and good living which comes with lawns and summer flowers. Keeping the tradition for all the people of Central City is Harley Berkey, custodian of the Court House of Gilpin County. Here he tends a municipal garden where anyone who wishes may walk and stop as often as he likes to admire the blossoms which flourish in the warm sun and cool nights of the mountain country. Sweet peas, bleeding heart, nasturtiums, bachelor's-buttons, and oriental poppies grow there. And in the late summer there are gladiolas and dahlias to lend their color to the capitol of the Kingdom of Gilpin. In the beds held by retaining walls and in the beds of the rocky hillside that forms the backdrop for house and garden.

The Opera House Garden

By Kathleen Marriage

When those Cornish miners built this Opera House in 1878 we wonder what they planted in the surrounding grounds? Did they suggest to Tom from Trebarfoot and to Larry from Launceston that when they'd set out next year for the U. S. A. they bring with them beeches, oaks and firs from the groves on the Cornish tors, poly-pody ferns from the Camelford roadsides and daffodil bulbs from the Lake streamslides?

However beautiful they made the grounds, the lapse during "ghost town" times brought an era of neglect in which any original planting died, dead as Queen Anne; so when the new Opera House committee took over, the occupants of this garden were chiefly dumps and rubble, tin cans and old bottles.

Miss Anne Evans, co-originator of the Opera House revival, realized that however attractive the interior of the Opera House the grounds were nothing to be proud of. So, a week or so before the first grand opening, the interested two men in improving this area. These two "builders of beauty" had energy to add to their discrimination. Up they went to Central City, set to work and soon all the lower area near the street level was cleared of unsightly debris. Now what to mitigate the startling bareness? It was midsummer so no tree planting was possible. They interested the local Forest Service who gave them a truck load of cut pine trees. These were fastened to Christmas tree stands, then the stands buried. Overnight here was a grove of evergreens that did wonders to improve appearances during that summer's Opera season.

Next year what to do? Operatic producers and their assistants don't
concern themselves with any scenery except such staging as may be painted. erected and removed at will so the committee bumped up against another Opera season with ground still bare. Again these same two men buckled to, and transplanted from a 'sample house' on display in Denver shrubs and trees left when the house was removed—Spruces, lilacs, spireas and other shrubs in full leaf. Their thumbs were right color for everything survived and once again the grounds were presentable. The two energetic friends in need? Mr. George Kelly and Mr. Walter Pesman.

The Garden Club of Denver, reflecting the glory of the Garden Club of America in its public spirit, took it over as their job to provide a long range plan for the whole garden—hillside included—and to plant towards this plan each spring.

The first such planting was begun at the street level working back towards the rugged steep hillside. Spruces by the high blank walls serve as a background for gay flowers, such sturdy fellows as: Anchusas dropmore and Barrelieri, Iceland Poppies with their numerous progeny, Centaurea macrocephala, Rocky Mountain Blue Columbine, Anthemis tinctoria, Campanula glomerata and Achillea Cloth of Gold.

On this rocky hillside and at this altitude, 8,500 feet above sea level, only the hardiest things are worth planting. By the steps which lead up the hillside are sedums, linarias, pentstemons and such others as will hang on by their eyebrows.

When, more or less breathless, we arrive at the top step we are rewarded by the welcome sight of a seat of rough stone amidst a group of Foxtail Pines, with a level paved area, a little retreat built in memory of Miss Anne Evans.

In anticipation of the reopening of the Opera House after war's hiatus more of the plan has been carried out. The planting was continued this spring with Foxtail Pines on the hillsides and spruces on the lower level, under the enthusiastic sponsorship of the Garden Club of Denver.

THE 1934 PLANTING, OPERA HOUSE GARDEN

ABOVE THE IDA KRUSE MCFARLANE MEMORIAL
BELOW THE OPERA HOUSE GARDEN Photos by S. S. Newbury
ABOVE—ST. JAMES METHODIST CHURCH, BUILT IN 1872  Photo by James S. Holme.
LEFT, ABOVE—LOOKING UP EUREKA STREET  Photo by S. S. Newbury.
LEFT, BELOW—CHARACTERISTIC CENTRAL CITY ARCHITECTURE.
"What next, Central City?" Have you reached the end of your advance? From undefiled natural beauty you have traveled through the gold and silver period to the dead-city stage, then you have experienced a rebirth, achieved national recognition. Your hillsides have changed from columbine and kinnikinnik to a fascinating combination of slag and yellow roses, then to a glory of delphinium and poppy, pansy and sweet pea. Is this the final goal? Or are you headed to greater things in horticulture and in indigenous charm?

Central City has served as a symbol in many respects. We can take it as a symbol of the future of high altitude gardens.

What makes the Iceland and Oriental poppy glow at 7,000 feet and higher with a brilliance not seen at lower altitude? Why do pansies and sweet peas keep blooming at Central City and Estes Park while looking washed out in Denver?

We might go a step farther and ask, for instance, why high altitude head lettuce is considered unsurpassed in quality, and why Colorado leads the United States in fall shipment of cauliflower, much of which is grown in the San Luis Valley at an elevation well over seven thousand feet. If we can find the answer we may be able to point the way to a highly important new development in Colorado horticulture. For much of our state is in the high altitude region.

The Colorado Yearbook lists 230 towns and cities; 63 of them are above 7,000 feet in altitude, 15 between 8,000 and 9,000, such as Black Hawk, Georgetown, Woodland Park and Lake City: 12 above 9,000, such as Fairplay, Silver Plume, Ward and Silverton: and there is Leadville at 10,190 feet above sea level.

Some of these towns have already established a reputation for specialty crops, such as Granby for lettuce. Monte Vista for potatoes, and Buena Vista for mountain peas. Cauliflower does exceedingly well up to 8,000 feet elevation. Spinach, onions and celery are being developed as high altitude crops. Wild hay production totals almost half a million tons in good years; with the present high prices who says "That ain't hay"?

So stands the record in 1946. To make a prediction for the future we need to get down to basic factors. And we also need to collect some less known facts of what is actually being done even now. How many people know, for instance, about the successful cultivation of pyrethrum in the neighborhood of Pagosa Springs (at an elevation of about 7,500 feet)? How little is generally known about the horticulture of the San Luis Valley, interesting as it is?

Schimper, in his "Plant Geographical" attempts to analyze the effects of altitude on plant life. Some of the factors, such as increased rainfall with increased elevation, a greater variation of temperature and a shorter season, correspond to the changes with higher latitude. In accordance we can expect some of the lush growth of Great Britain (and of Victoria in British Columbia) at Idaho Springs, Central City and Crested Butte, for instance.

To a certain extent some other factors are common to both altitude and latitude, and it has been pointed out that one can see similar plant changes by either going up two thousand feet, or by going north ten degrees in latitude. There are, for instance, more actinic, or chemical rays in both cases, prob-
ably causing more vivid colors in flowers.

On the other hand, the rarefied air at higher elevations brings about an entirely new set of conditions that cannot be duplicated at northern latitude.

Thus we find at Central City a plant association quite different from that at any low altitude, though it may graduate into that of adjoining regions. There is an intensity of light, a variation of sun and shade, and a rapid alternation of moisture and dryness of the air, that is quite unique. We find cushion plants studded thick with flowers, and woolly-leaved plants well adapted to these conditions.

Up to this point we have generalized in our analysis; now we need to show variations between different regions, even with the same altitude. Ouray and Alamosa are at similar elevation (around 7,500 feet.), but the former has a rainfall of well over 30 inches per year, the latter of less than eleven. No wonder Ouray can grow the native boxwood-like Mountain Lover (Pachystima myrsinites) and Alamosa can’t even use the English Privet as a hedgeplant. (Idaho Springs is reported as having an annual precipitation of 14.83 inches, Central City has closer to 20 inches.)

Then there is the variation in the length of growing season: the extreme is Telluride, where one year the latest killing frost was July 31, and another year the earliest killing frost August 1. What chance has a tender plant in such a climate?

To return to our knitting (or should we say “to our sowing”—and other high altitude gardening?), what does all this have to do with the future of gardens in Central City and other mountain towns? Just this, that the very conditions that make plant growth difficult in one respect, give an opportunity for specialties in another respect. We may confidently look forward to interesting developments in mountain gardening.

How can we apply this knowledge to a very practical question: what to plant at our mountain cabins?

Suppose you have a summer home above the Opera House? (yes, it would almost be sure to be “above” it!)—what would you grow? There are three types of plants that will do well. First, of course, the very hardy things that will stand the “gaff” almost anywhere.

The matrimony vine is a good example (Lycium halimifolium). You don’t have to worry a single minute about its growing, only about getting rid of it once it takes a hold. Virginia Creeper (Parthenocissus quinquefolia) is a sure thing, so is Bouncing Bet (Saponaria officinalis); Golden Glow and Goldenrod are dependables, Wild (Mock) cucumber (Echinocystis lobata) is apt to become an unwelcome guest, once established, and so is Mullein (Verbascum thapsis). The magenta phlox and the Creeping Bellflower (Campanula rapunculoides) can be counted on to grow and to keep on growing, crowding out most other perennials.

The second group of plants that you could and should grow consists of the natives, the most striking ones of which are mentioned in the Norton article in this number (pages 3 to 6). Among them are Thimbleberry and Native Spirea (Holodiscus) both very ornamental shrubs. The only difficulty is that many native plants are not easy to transplant. For success it is best to buy them from a reliable nursery rather than to dig the “wild” ones.

To the third group (introduced plants) belongs the Yellow Rose mentioned by Prudence Bostwick in her article and by Mrs. Marriage on the Opera House garden. All of the introductions enumerated by them have
proved themselves over a long period of years; practically all of them will grow equally well in other mountain gardens. Places with more rainfall, like Ouray, are apt to show a wider variety; annual babybreath (Gypsophila elegans) is very good there as well as in Boulder County. On the other hand, places with alkaline soil, like the San Luis Valley, have a more limited choice.

To this third group of introduced plants will be added a great many more as time proves them. Many rock garden plants from various parts of the world will find a congenial home in Central City and other high altitude towns. New England perennials such as Trillium and Bloodroot show good promise if planted in moist, protected nooks, where ferns and columbineds thrive. Almost any type of bulb can be grown in medium altitudes: and their color is often more intense than at lower elevations. That is also true of Iceland and Oriental Poppy, Pansies, Bleeding Heart, Delphinium, Sweet William and of many common annuals.

The proposed Rocky Mountain Botanical Garden intends to have substations at various elevations where plants from other mountain regions will be tried out: Ural mountains, Chile, Bolivia, South Africa, China. Such a procedure will add dozens if not hundreds of new species to our flora. Central City has been mentioned as one of these substations. This might add another glory to its luster.

Dreams of the future? Yes, but dreams that can be realized. There is another dream nature lovers covet about much of this mountain mining country, a dream of revegetation. Roads, prospect holes, dumps and abandoned mines have left the natural landscape badly scarred. The result of placer mining and settling basins is even more ghastly. Central City and surroundings, being an old camp, shows the beginning of revegetation. If left to nature alone this is a very long process. Scientific observation on the Rampart Range slope places the time at not less than 25 years, even to get the original stand of grass back. For the re-establishment of tree growth it may well take fifty years and more. But man has now learned how to cooperate with nature.

The result of this speeded up revegetation is encouraging. Native grasses, wild roses, raspberries, chokecherries, and on large stretches evergreen seedlings, all do their part. Virginia creeper and hopvines help to cover over prospect holes (but dangerous places must be clearly marked!). Old abandoned roads can be partly reseeded, partly planted out by skillful shrub planting. Aspens are not difficult to transplant if there is enough moisture. Ponderosa pine, Limber pine and Bristlecone pine do well in most places. Lodgepole pine is not quite so adaptable.

On barren slopes we have found "plantpockets" a practical way of starting a few growing spots. In these pockets of good soils can be planted seeds of native plants, chunks of grass sod, even shrub seedlings. The most adaptable plants will start first, others will follow as conditions become right. Even here we must follow nature's own sample of evolution, which we can speed up to a certain extent.

Yes, Central City is a symbol. It is also a sampling ground. Let us trust that its revival is of many kinds, and that it will show us what we can do to use our natural resources in the best possible way.

"We shall know a world transfigured, Which our eyes but dimly see: We shall make our towns and woodlands Beautiful from sea to sea."
THE ARTISTS and AUTHORS

Muriel V. Sibell (Mrs. Francis Wolle), whose painting "Central City Terraces" has been reproduced on the cover of this Central City issue of "THE GREEN THUMB," began to record Central City in 1926, when many more buildings were standing than are to be found today. In 1932 and 1933 during the Opera House Festival she had an exhibit of her sketches in one of the stores on Eureka Street.

In 1933 she published a book, "Ghost Cities of Colorado," which features Central City and contains illustrations and text gleaned from old newspapers.

Each year she has added to her collection of paintings and drawings of Central City and other mining communities and is at present preparing a book on the many ghost towns of the entire state.

Miss Sibell is Professor of Art and Head of the Fine Arts Department of the University of Colorado.

The editors of "THE GREEN THUMB" acknowledge with appreciation Miss Sibell's generous permission to reproduce her painting.


Mark and Claire Norton are noted writers on horticultural subjects (The Perennial Gardener). They have experimented for years in domestica- tion of Colorado native plants.

Prudence Bostwick received her Ph.D. from Ohio State University. She has been a teacher in the Denver Public Schools in the field of Biology, English and Social Studies. Miss Bostwick is now Supervisor in the Department of Instruction in the Denver Public Schools.

Kathleen Marriage, for many years owner of Upton Gardens, Colorado Springs, is a well known horticulturist and writer. She is noted for her interest in botany and alpine plants. Mrs. Marriage has had experience in horticulture in both Great Britain and the United States.

M. Walter Pesman, Landscape Architect and Land Planner. Pioneer in Colorado Roadside Development, Denver Schoolground planning and Memorial Parks. Author of "Meet the Natives," handbook of Rocky Mountain trees, shrubs and wildflowers. For many years Instructor at Denver University in Landscape Architecture. He was president of the original Colorado Forestry Association, and instrumental in its reorganization.

The pen and ink sketches of the Harrison Yellow Roses on Page 1 and on the back cover are the work of Margaret Doppelmayr, young Denver artist and former pupil of Vance Kirkland.

A Good Woodsman

Is a fellow you would want to go camping with—again

That Kind of a Fellow—

Always leaves his camp-site in better condition than he found it. He buries the rubbish, buries the cans, and puts out the fire so that it STAYS OUT. No forest fires mark his trail.

He uses a camera instead of a gun. All the wild creatures that crawl, fly or run are his FRIENDS instead of his prey.

He picks few flowers and never pulls them up by the roots.

He never chops down a tree unless he has a mighty good reason for doing it.

Remember—

You were not the first over the trail. Leave the pleasant places along the way just as pleasant for those who follow you.

The Colorado Mountain Club