



Wildflower Names

WHAT a wealth of folklore, history and even poetry can be found in the names of common wildflowers!

Sheer, light fantasy, for instance, dances in such names as Johnny-jump-up, wake-robin, spring beauty and snow-drop—all of them flowers of the early season, when spring crowds close on the heels of departing winter. So also for flowers of later blooming: goldenrod, sunflower, Indian paintbrush, morning-glory, day-lily, suggest the splendor which green-leaved plants, alone of living things, are able to borrow from the sun.

Some of the derivations are not so obvious, though it takes but little searching to find them out. You need but break the rhizome and see the red sap flow, to know why the bloodroot was so called. Again, if you look at the six-pointed patterns on the leaf-scars of another rootstock, suggesting the six-pointed star familiar in Hebrew symbolism, you will see at once why the plant is called Solomon's seal.

Sometimes you have to trace the history of language to find the roots of a plant's name. Daisy, for example, was originally *day's-eye*, because the yellow, sun-like disk is shut up at night by the folding ray-petals, like an eye behind its eyelid.

But let not easy analogies lead you astray. The pansy is not named for the eye of Pan, has nothing to do with that mischievous goat-god. It is simply a naively englished form of the French *pensée*—an allusion to the ancient notion that pansies provoke thought. (You remember Ophelia, of course?)

A little further rambling with foreign-language dictionaries will lead you into some genuine classical allusions: how the

iris is named for the goddess of the rainbow, the narcissus for the self-admiring youth at the lakeside. Many of the classic allusions have found their way into English: Venus' comb, Venus' looking-glass, Venus' flytrap—botanists not less than other mortals seem to have been followers of that alluring goddess.

Many of the plants that have plain-English common names were given classic designations by botanists. Thus, the water-lily is *Nymphaea*—could anything be more appropriate? The Latin name of sagebrush is (astonishingly enough) *Artemisia*. A whole pantheon is honored at once in the technical name of the shooting-star, *Dodacatheon*, which is Greek for "twelve gods."

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ICHTHYOLOGY

Fight Without Forebrain But Need It in Love

BRAINS are more needed in love than in war by the gorgeous Siamese fighting fish, favorite species with fanciers of tropical fishes. At the meeting of the American Association of Anatomists, Dr. G. K. Noble and Ray Borne, of the American Museum of Natural History, told of the changes in behavior in these and other fish species induced by surgical removal of the forebrain—the part of the brain that in higher animals at least has charge of voluntary action.

Both the Siamese fighting fish and another aquarium favorite, the jewel fish, seemed to be handicapped little or not at all in their fighting by the loss of most or all of the forebrain. However, courting, nest-making (these fishes do make nests) and other activities in the sex complex became impossible when the forebrain was removed. They could get along with either right or left half of it gone, but had to have at least half a brain for successful courtship and family life.

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METALLURGY

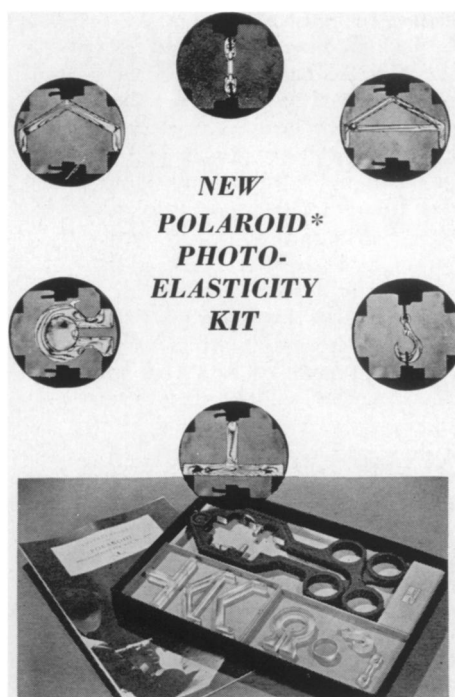
Largest Electric Furnace Makes Steel for Defense

See Front Cover

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