

## HISTORY

Mount Desert Island is unique for its beauty and for glacial accidents that left it with flora from both the cold north and the warmer south. In the early 1900s, Charles W. Eliot and George B. Dorr recognized these special qualities and began to acquire land to be preserved for public enjoyment and for “educational and scientific purposes.” Dorr bought the Sieur de Monts Spring area in 1909, named it the Wild Gardens of Acadia, and in 1916 presented it to the United States government as part of Lafayette National Park, which subsequently became Acadia National Park.

In 1961, Acadia’s superintendent, Harold Hubler, offered a three-quarter acre plot to grow and display wildflowers grown by participants in a propagation program sponsored initially by the Bar Harbor Garden Club. Although the plot was covered with blackberry bushes and mature red maples damaged by the 1947 fire, its assets included a wealth of large ferns and a winding brook fed by Sieur de Monts Spring. The Wild Gardens of Acadia committee began laying out paths and divided the Gardens into areas simulating natural plant communities. The decision to include only those species indigenous to Acadia precluded planting daisy, yarrow, lupine, rugosa rose, purple loosestrife, and clover, which are abundant on Mount Desert Island but not native.

Guided by Edgar T. Wherry’s *Wild Flowers of Mt. Desert Island*, published in 1928 under the aegis of the Garden Club of Mount Desert, volunteers established more than 400 indigenous plant species. These efforts have been recognized by awards from the Garden Club of America, the New England Wild Flower Society, the Garden Club Federation of Maine, the National Council of State Garden Clubs, the Massachusetts Horticultural Society, and a Certificate of Appreciation to the Wild Gardens of Acadia committee from the National Park Service.

In 2010, the Wild Gardens of Acadia became an official committee of Friends of Acadia and formalized this new standing through a partnership with Friends of Acadia and Acadia National Park. The Gardens not only enhance understanding of native plants and their habitats but also foster stewardship—ensuring that parks and gardens continued to be sustained through volunteers and private philanthropy. The Gardens are maintained primarily by volunteers, and a head gardener, sponsored by Friends of Acadia; they plant, study, collect, propagate, label, and fundraise. The Park supports a student intern in summer, and docents greet visitors. Beyond this support, the budget is met by grants, gifts from individuals, the Garden Club of Mount Desert and the Bar Harbor Garden Club, plant sales, and the sale of cards and leaflets at the Garden entrances.

## HELPFUL BOOKS

### On Cultivation

Birdseye, C. and E. *Growing Woodland Plants*  
Steffek, E.F. *Wild Flowers and How To Grow Them*

### On Plant Identification

Audubon Society. *Field Guide to North American Trees (Eastern)*  
Fernald, M.L., ed. *Manual of Botany*  
Haines, A. and T. Vining, *Flora of Maine*  
Mittelhauser, G.H., L.L. Gregory, S.C. Rooney, and J.E. Weber. *The Plants of Acadia National Park*  
Newcomb, Lawrence. *Newcomb’s Wildflower Guide*  
Peterson, R.T. and M. McKenny. *A Field Guide to Wildflowers*

### On Bird Identification

National Geographic Society. *Field Guide to the Birds of North America*  
Peterson, R.T. *A Field Guide to the Birds*  
Sibley, David A. *The Sibley Guide to Birds*

## SEASONAL BLOOM or FRUITING

While conditions vary from year to year, you may expect to find flowers or fruits in the following habitats during these periods.

**MAY:** Foamflower, Saxifrage (1); Mayflower (1, 2, 9); Violets (1, 3); Trilliums (1, 7, 9); Hobblebush (2, 7, 9); Pussytoes (3); Leatherleaf (5, 11); Marsh marigold (7, 12); Starflower (9); Bog Solomonplume (10); Skunk cabbage (11); Buckbean (12).

**MAY/JUNE:** Jack-in-the-pulpit, Anemone (1); Lady’s slipper (1, 9); Solomonplume, Twisted stalk (1,7); Shad (1, 8, 9); Hawthorn (1, 2, 8); Blue-eyed grass, Bluets (3); Roseroot (4, 6); Columbine (4); Cranberry (4, 8, 10); Rhodora (5, 10, 11); Golden Heather, Chokeberry (5); Bluebead lily (7, 9); Nannyberry (8); Bunchberry (8, 9); Bog rosemary (10); Labrador tea, Bog laurel (10, 11); Calla (11).

**JUNE/JULY:** Wood sorrel (1); Canada lily (1, 7); Twinflower (1, 9); Sumac (2, 8); Dogbane, Meadow rue (3); Three-toothed cinquefoil, Sundrops (4); Corydalis, Lambkill (5); Beachhead iris, Beach pea, Silver and gold potentilla, Herb-Robert (6); Blue flag (6, 7, 12); Solomon’s seal, Wood lily (7); Bluebead lily (7, 9); Partridgeberry, Pyrolas, Mountain laurel (9); Bog orchids, Pitcher plant, Haretailed cottongrass (10); Arrowhead (12).

**JULY/AUGUST:** Jewelweed, Boneset (1); Purple fringed orchid, Wintergreen (1, 9); Flowering raspberry, Sarsaparilla (2); Asters, Goldenrods, Meadowsweet, Steeplebush (2, 3); Blueberry (2, 5, 7, 8); Rose (3,7, 8); Fireweed, Evening primrose (3); Harebell, Mountain sandwort (4); Crowberry (5); Skullcap (6, 11); Germander, Sea lavender (6); Cardinal flower (7, 8); Rattlesnake plantain, Clematis (9); Club-spur orchid (10); Yellow loosestrife (11); Water lily, Pickerelweed (12).

**AUGUST/SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER:** Baneberry (1); Hog peanut (2); Asters (2, 3); Goldenrod (2, 3, 6); Turtlehead (2, 12); Pearly everlasting, Ladies’ tresses (3); Winterberry (5, 7, 8, 12); Sweet pepperbush (7, 8); Bunchberry (8, 9); Witch hazel, Mountain ash (8); Potato bean (9); Cranberries, Tawny cottongrass (10).

# THE WILD GARDENS OF ACADIA

*A project to display, preserve, and propagate in typical habitats  
the native flora of Mount Desert Island*



At  
Sieur de Monts Spring  
Acadia National Park

Illustrated by Ruth Soper  
Printed 2010

The 12 sections of the Wild Gardens of Acadia reflect typical habitats found on Mount Desert Island. Plant species are labeled in their most characteristic habitats.



1

In the **MIXED WOODS**, to the left of the parking lot entrance, are the variations of shade, moisture, and acidity found in a predominantly deciduous forest. Under sugar maple, hawthorn, and beech trees are baneberry, Solomon plume, foamflower, wintergreen, pyrola, sundrops, and violets. Across the path is a small cedar swamp. Among the trees near the swamp are viburnum, horsetail, large ferns, and a stand of showy lady's slipper. The **FERN PATH** displays an extensive fern collection. A dry brook, shaded by hop-hornbeam and conifers, is edged with dalibarda and wood sorrel. On a small moist island are Jack-in-the-pulpit and goldthread, and on a larger island are shad and birch trees shading yellow lady's slipper, trillium, and mayflower. Opposite the moist island grow red, black, and white ash trees. A bench beside twinflower and partridgeberry affords a view of Dorr Mountain and the bird thicket.

2

Along the **ROADSIDE** are sumac and a hawthorn, as well as a mass of New York ferns growing in full sun. Growing in front of the remains of an old stone wall are asters, goldenrods, flowering raspberry, and juniper. In addition, there are edible berries: blackberry, huckleberry, raspberry, and blueberry. Beside the brook are hog peanut and ferns (interrupted, cinnamon, and royal).



3

The **MEADOW**, an area of continual change, is mowed yearly to prevent the return of the forest. Bluets, blue-eyed grass, strawberries, pussytoes, and violets bloom in the spring. They are succeeded in mid-summer by fireweed, dogbane, pearly everlasting, eyebright, sweetfern, steeple bush, meadowsweet, cinquefoils, meadow rue, Robbins ragwort, roses, evening primrose, and in autumn by goldenrods and asters.



4

The **MOUNTAIN** supports plants of higher elevations: mountain sandwort, black and broom crowsfoot, three-toothed cinquefoil, Bar Harbor juniper, rock polypody, mountain cranberry, bearberry, bayberry, northern Jack pine, and the southern bear oak. Among the rocks are columbine, pale corydalis, spleenwort, and harebell.



5

The **HEATH**, dry and rocky, is dominated by plants of the heath family: rhodora (both the common rosy and rare white), lambkill, blueberries, and huckleberry. The acid soil, low in nutrients, supports a variety of other plants including golden heather, pinweed, bush honeysuckle, chokeberry, sweetfern, and sweet gale.



6

The **SEASIDE**, constructed and maintained by the introduction of seaweed and beach gravel, supports roseroot (a rare sedum) and the more unusual arctic beachhead iris. Here also are skullcap, orach, blue flag iris, beach pea, sea lavender, seaside goldenrod, Scotch lovage, gromwell, spreading silver and gold potentilla, and beach grasses.



7

The **BROOKSIDE/DAMP THICKET** is an area of comparative plantings. On the moist bank of the brook are cardinal flower, hobblebush, dogwoods, and winterberry. Across the path in the **DAMP THICKET** are viburnums: maple-leaved, witherod, arrowwood, and highbush cranberry; three dogwoods: pale, pagoda, and bunchberry; two hollies: winterberry and mountain, and the related beaked hazel and hop-hornbeam. Several examples of the lily family from different habitats are also gathered here: wood Solomon's seal, star Solomon's seal, small Solomon's seal, wood Solomon's seal, trout lily, wild oats, and rosybells.



8

The **BIRD THICKET** provides plants that attract birds. Included are cherry, elderberry, bush honeysuckle, hawthorn, mountain ash, highbush cranberry, nannyberry, maple-leaved viburnum, sumac, rose, shad, cranberry, bunchberry, blueberry, and the fall-blooming witch hazel and sweet pepperbush. Local birds are listed on a chart on the nearby bulletin board. The unique rectangular holes made by a Pileated Woodpecker are displayed in the stump of a tree. The **THICKET** also has many specimens of edible and medicinal plants, trees, and shrubs which are beneficial to humans.



9

In the **CONIFEROUS WOODS** cone-bearing trees are planted close together for easy identification. The fallen needles of spruces, pines, hemlock, fir, and larch (tamarack) acidify the soil and their boughs provide year-round shade for Canada mayflower, goldthread, pipsissewa, pyrolas, blue-bead lily, wintergreen, partridgeberry, twinflower, bunchberry dogwood, starflower, whorled loosestrife, clubmosses, and orchids. Mayflower grows in the more open areas. Not yet excluded by the heavy shade of a mature coniferous forest are various young trees and shrubs: birch, yew, honeysuckle, hobblebush, witherod, and the locally infrequent mountain laurel. The fence by the parking lot supports clematis and potato bean. To the right of the entrance is a damp area where mosses, ferns, and skunk cabbage thrive.



10

AS A RESULT OF BEAVER ACTIVITY IN PONDS THAT ARE LINKED TO THE GARDENS BY STREAMS, THE PATH AROUND THE BOG IS OFTEN FLOODED EARLY IN THE SEASON.

The path to the **BOG** begins on the far side of the bridge. The moist and highly acidic sphagnum bog supports several northern plant species: baked-apple berry, crowsfoot, bog Solomon's plume, two varieties of cranberry, cotton grasses, Labrador tea, bog laurel, bog rosemary and a black spruce. Here also are several bog orchids and the insectivorous sundew, bladderwort, and pitcher plant.



11

The **MARSH** supports calla, Joe Pye weed, marsh cinquefoil, buckbean, meadow beauty, yellow loosestrife, skullcap, and skunk cabbage. Leatherleaf, rhodora, Labrador tea, and members of the heath family are also found here. Unlike a bog, where there is standing water, the Marsh has a natural outlet to the brook.



12

The **POND** is highlighted in early spring by marsh marigolds and in summer by waterlilies and their attendant frogs. Found among the lilies are horsetail, arrowhead, and pickleweed, and along the bank are blue flag, cattail, sweet gale, steeplebush, buckbean, cardinal flower, turtlehead, and sedges. Near the bench are trillium and sweet flag. On the far side a larch shades mosses and wild calla.

