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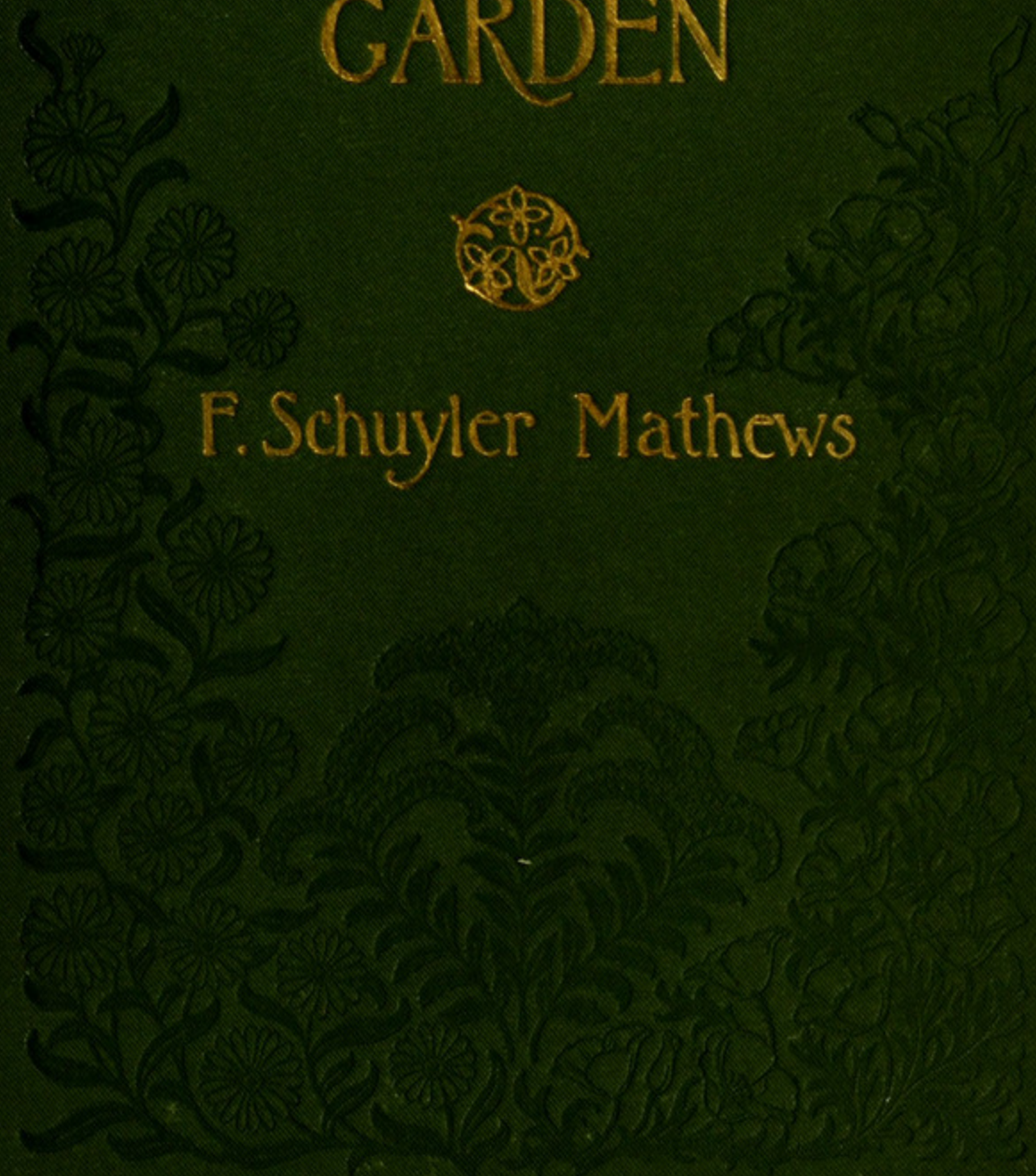
1925



FAMILIAR FLOWERS OF FIELD AND GARDEN



F. Schuyler Mathews



passer-by. The dogbane blooms in early summer, and it is often found in the company of the milkweed.

Common Milkweed. The common milkweed needs no introduction; its pretty pods of white silk are familiar to every child, who treasures them until the time comes when the place in which they are stowed away is one mass

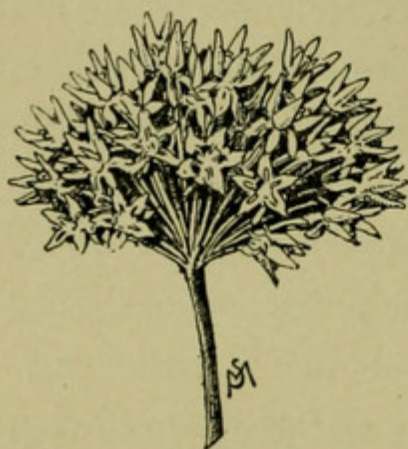


Milkweed Down.

of bewildering, unmanageable white fluff. Then there are vague talks about stuffing pillows and all that sort of thing; but the first attempt to manipulate the lawless, airy down usually results in disastrous confusion, and whole

masses go floating away on the slightest zephyr. Of course, there is more fun in chasing milkweed down than in patiently stuffing a pillow; so the milkweed has its own way and goes sailing off to scatter its seeds hither and thither, and the pillow, perhaps, is filled with the aromatic balsam fir. But, before the last tiny tuft of silk has escaped with its balancing brown seed, we must place it under the microscope and examine the bronze-colored seed and the strange downy sail. Can one imagine anything more perfect? Place some bits of white sewing silk beside the sheeny silk of Nature, and the former will look like coarse, white rope. Gray must have been puzzled to know how to describe the color of the milkweed's flowers; what a predicament for Nature to put a color-blind botanist in! She has evidently mixed up all the colors on her palette and painted the beautiful blossoms in absolutely neutral tints. Gray does not stop to analyze the color, but dismisses the matter by labeling the flower "dull greenish purplish." Now, if we will take the paint box and mix pure green and pure purple together, and then throw in a tiny bit of black to get the "dull" effect, we will not approach the color of the milkweed's flower. No, Nature did not produce her color that way; the flower is neither green nor purple, nor a mixture of those colors, but is a neutralized

brown, so we must call it brown, with modifications which fit the case. My modification, then, would be pale *lavender* brown, with a few touches of pale-

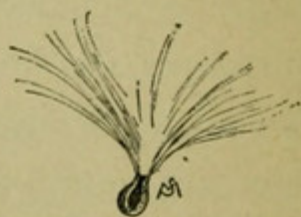


Milkweed.

brown lavender. For the indorsement of my statement I must refer to the microscope; under it the colors will show themselves definitely, and the flower will also prove to be exquisitely formed. The milkweed is in blossom during the early part of the summer; its

heavy perfume is cloying; in other words, it is altogether *too* sweet.

Butterfly Weed. The butterfly weed is a variety of *Asclepias tuberosa*. milkweed which is very common through New England, particularly in the vicinity of Cape Cod. It grows in dry sandy places, blooms in midsummer, and stains the pastures with a brilliant orange-color, which, I should think, would set a colorist of the impressionist school quite wild. The shape of the flowers is almost exactly like that of the common milkweed; but, unlike the latter plant, the stems and stalks when broken do not exude a plentiful supply of sticky "milk." I have drawn the seed



Floating Seed of Butterfly Weed.