

Flowers Of The Holy Land Play Prominent Role In Scriptures

Editor's note: This article is the second of a two-part series written by a member of the Sutherlin Garden Club especially for publication during the Christmas season.

In part I of "A Garden So Rare," we learned about the trees of the Bible as well as the grains and the nuts that grew in the Holy Land. Part II is about the flowers, fruits and herbs.

Plants play such a deep and significant role all through the Scriptures that it is only natural that a special study of the plants of the Bible attracted the attention of theologians, historians and scholars and through these studies many errors in terminology have been discovered. Early translators and scribes had been unconcerned about whether they called a rose a lily or a lily a rose. Even though philologists examined the oldest Hebrew and Greek texts, all the different translations and versions, comparing the names of plants in each and searching the names for original meanings, they found that plant names in Hebrew and Greek imply much more than in our language. Then the botanist stepped in!

Flora Is Studied

During the middle of the 18th century, Linnaeus, "father of botanical nomenclature" and some of his followers embarked for Palestine to make a study of the flora. Since then many botanists have explored the area and Bible plant-lore has become Bible botany.

Palestine is a land of wild flowers. There are red tulips in Galilee, purple gladioli, lupine and anemones whose prevailing color is red and there are lilies. The belief that these lilies were not white but red and purple comes from the fact that they were so embroidered on the royal robes. When we turn to the lilies of the Bible, we come upon the most beautiful flowers of the Holy Land and upon one of the most beautiful verses spoken by Jesus, from Matthew: "And why take ye thought for raiment. Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these, etc." This verse arouses an image of white Madonna lilies, an impression which, no doubt has been formed because the Madonna Lily has been included in many paintings of the Madonna, the Annunciation and other phases of the life of Christ. Most authorities believe that it did not grow in the Holy Land at the beginning of the Christian Era at all and even though it grows there today, it is scarce.

The lily in the Song of Solomon is the scarlet lily. The "lilies of the field" are believed to be the poppy anemones with their flowers of red, blue and gold (Matthew). There was lily-work on the Temple of Solomon. It is described in Kings and is believed that the motif was furnished by the water-lily. In Hebrew, the name Susannah literally means "lily."

There were salvias everywhere. The seven-branched candlestick (Exodus) is the sage plant or salvia and it is known that the Hebrews derived the design of their golden candlesticks from the form of this plant. Ivy is mentioned in Macabees with reference to the feast of Bacchus. Plants of thorny habit are common in Palestine. The word "thorn" in the Gospel denotes the material composing our Saviour's Crown of Thorns.

Nomenclature Confusing

Eleven roses are mentioned in the Bible. The Rose of Sharon is really a tulip, Song of Solomon. The Rose named in Isaiah "And the desert shall rejoice and blossom as a rose" is really a narcissus. In Ecclesiastes, the rose is the oleander. The "rolling thing" which has come to be known as the "Rose of Jericho" is the tumbleweed of the Holy Land. In fall, the plant dries and becomes light and is rolled about by the wind. The Burning Bush of Exodus is the crimson flowered mistletoe. Star of Bethlehem grew everywhere and is mentioned as Dove's Dung in Kings.

The chief vegetables of the Bible are the leeks, onions, garlic (Numbers) and the lentils and beans (Ezekiel). There is an amusing tradition that when Satan stepped out of the garden of Eden after the fall, an onion sprang up where he planted his right foot and garlic where his left foot touched.

The grapes of the Bible were the wine grapes which once over-ran the country but were up - rooted by the invading hordes of Saracens and Babylonians. Throughout Palestine, the pomegranate was a favorite fruit and a symbol of fertility and life because of its many seeds. The robes of the Jewish high priests were embroidered with motifs representing the pomegranate. (Song of Solomon). The muskmelon and the watermelon are named in Numbers. There are many "Mannas" mentioned in the Scriptures, one a lichen, one an alga (Exodus) and one a camel-thorn, an incense-producing plant.

Herbs grew abundantly in the Holy Land. Named in the Scriptures are anise (dill), mint, rue, cummin, cinnamon, saffron, fitches (fennel) or nutmeg and of course mustard seed of Luke "If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed." Mint, anise and cummin were used to pay tithes.

The hyssop, lowliest and most humble plant, stirred up more controversy than any other plant mentioned in the Bible. No conclusion has been arrived at whether the hyssop was the marjoram, the caper-plant, the sorghum (reed), the maidenhair spleenwort or wall-rue. It may have been any of these. Hyssop is mentioned in Exodus, Leviticus, Psalms and in John of the New Testament, so that several different plants must have been the hyssop of the Bible. It was used by all the Israelite families in observance of the Passover. There are several varieties of myrrh named in Proverbs, Mark and Genesis. The bitter-herbs in Numbers are the endive, dandelion and sorrel.

Plants that are often associated with stories from the Scriptures, but do not appear in the Bible are Easter lilies which come from Asia; passion flower, which was given religious significance by the Spaniards who discovered it in South America; and the prickly pear cactus which did not grow in the Holy Land till recent times, obeyed.

Much of the "goodly land" has become naked and barren. The great forests of olden times have been devastated and only through the use of the terrace system, do farmers manage to keep the soil from being washed away. In many places the thorns and thistles of prophecy refuse to flourish; the bare, rocky hillsides are mute testimony to the truth that the laws of nature and God must be obeyed.

Thur., Dec. 26, 1963— The News-Review, Page 7

In The ARMED SERVICES

Arthur M. Garrick, seaman, USN, son of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur M. Garrick of Rt. 1, Myrtle Creek, is serving with Attack Squadron 22 aboard the aircraft carrier USS Midway, operating out of Alameda, Calif.

Marlyn H. Cannon Jr., Private, son of Merlyn H. Cannon, of Oakland, completed recruit training Nov. 12 at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot, San Diego, Calif.

Arthur E. Fox, Airman Third Class as Roseburg, is being reassigned to Travis AFB, Calif., following his graduation from the technical training course for United States Air Force air passenger specialists here at Sheppard AFB, Tex.

Airman Fox, son of Mr. and Mrs. Ernest J. Fox of Rt. 1, Roseburg, was trained in air passenger scheduling, baggage handling, passenger priorities and requirements for entry into foreign countries.

The airman is a graduate of Roseburg High School.

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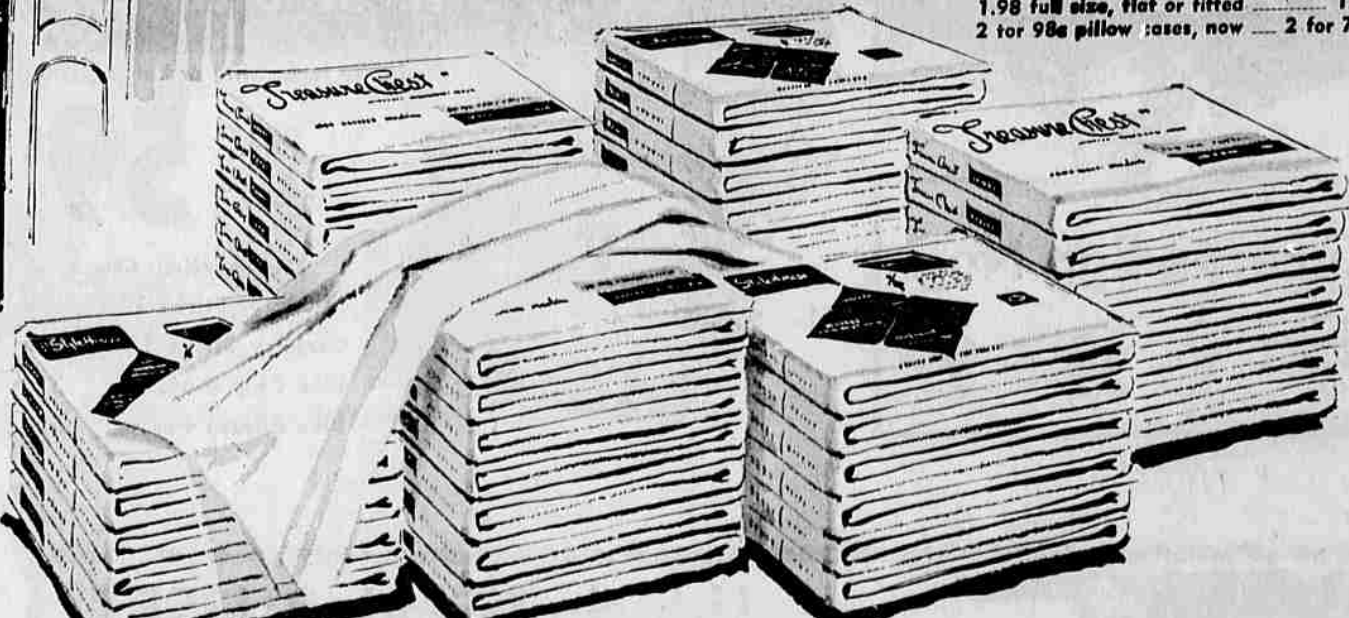
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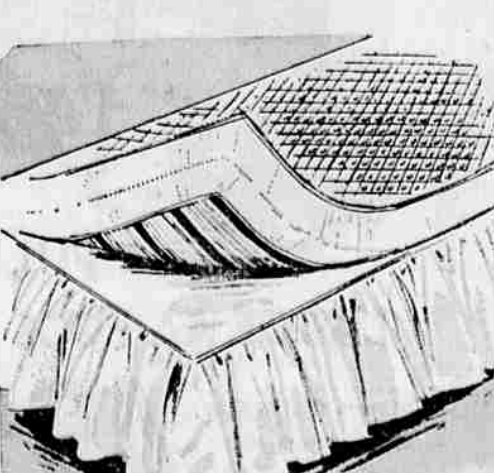
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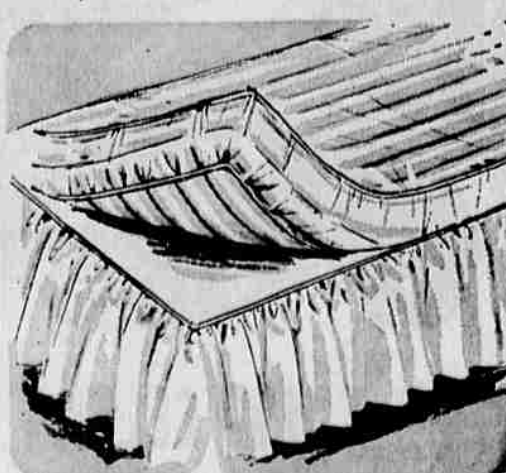
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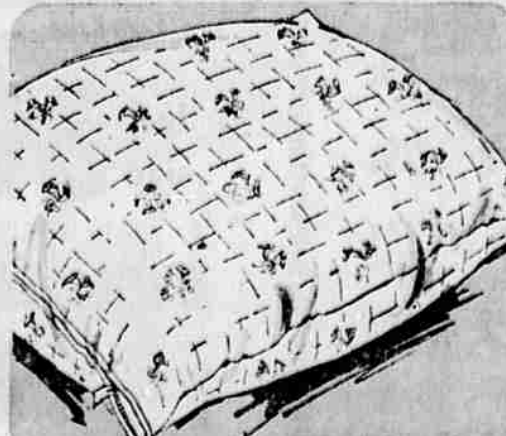


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