

The Little Giant of the Northern Wastelands

by **A. M. Howland**, Prince Albert

It has no beautiful flowers, no strong sturdy trunk, no spreading crown nodding in the breeze. The traveller hesitates in doubt when he meets the little giant who seizes his feet and makes his muscles strain for freedom. Who and what is it?

It is tiny, with a stem barely four inches long. Its branchlets vary from yellow to brown, green, purple, or red. But when united with millions of its kind, it forms huge mats that sometimes cover miles of the wastelands with a deep springy cushion of moss. As you walk on these spongy mats you sink down to your ankles and to your knees, and after you have gone, no record remains of your passing. It can implacably choke small lakes into oblivion.

It is Sphagnum Moss. The scientific name is *Sphagnum capillaceum* and sometimes the related species *S. palustre* is also found.

What good is it? You may be sur-

prised. It is used for a top dressing on lawns and gardens and as a packaging material for preserving and shipping flowers, shrubs and trees. As a land builder, it converts marshes into places where our valuable black spruce pulpwood can grow, and, over eons of time, into farmland. In some parts of the world it is the builder of peat-bogs, used as fuel by untold thousands of people. It makes good field dressings for open wounds, being highly absorbent. It makes a good mattress, and who has not heard of the old (and not so old) log cabins with the cracks chinked with moss to keep out the cold. If you peel back the moss in many muskegs, you will strike a layer of perma-frost, a real ice-box.

On a hot summer day when your shirt is sticking to your back, find a nice deep moss hummock beneath a shady black spruce, flop down and enjoy the cool comfort provided by this little giant of the wastelands.

The Western Red Lily

by **Rita Timushka** and **Bonnie Drummond**, Swift Current

On the warm Sunday afternoon of July 12, our grade VIII principal and teacher of Elmwood School, Mr. K. G. Aberdeen, asked if we would like to spend the afternoon at Lac Pelletier. He mentioned that we would see lots of Western Red Lilies, the floral emblem of Saskatchewan which we had studied in class.

We left Swift Current at two o'clock and before three we arrived at a magnificent field of Western Red Lilies. We had seen pictures of them, but we had not realized how beautiful they really are. They are a lovely shade of bright orange. We went to the nearby farmhouse of Walter Blanke and got permission to pick some. We picked about forty which Mr. Aberdeen was going to press for next year's grade VIII class. The flowers were in prime condition and we noticed that they had a faint but noticeable perfume. Most stems had only one flower, but a few had two or three. While we were picking them we kept in mind that we

should leave several leaves on the remaining stem so that the plant could make and store food and grow again next year.

After taking the enclosed picture and caring for the lilies we proceeded to Darling's Beach where we enjoyed a refreshing swim and lunch. We had a very enjoyable outing and learned what a lovely flower our Provincial floral emblem is.



Photo by Mrs. Aberdeen
Rita, Bonnie, Mr. Aberdeen and the
Western Red Lilies