

THE FIRST BOOK OF PLANTS

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The first book of plants by Alice Dickinson

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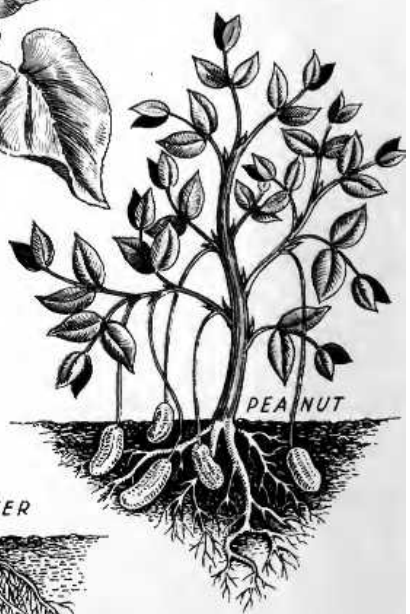
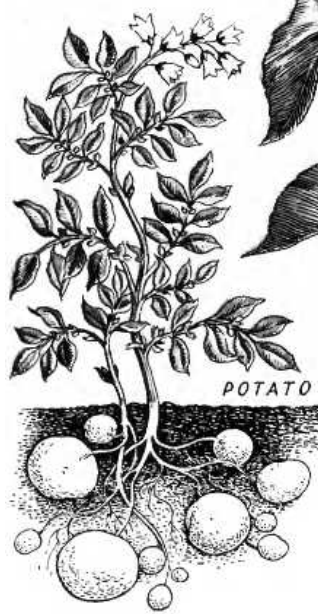
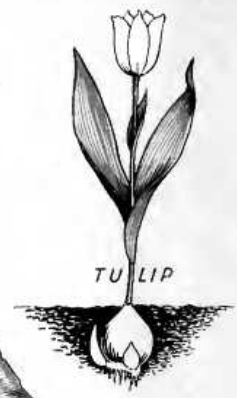
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ALICE DICKINSON

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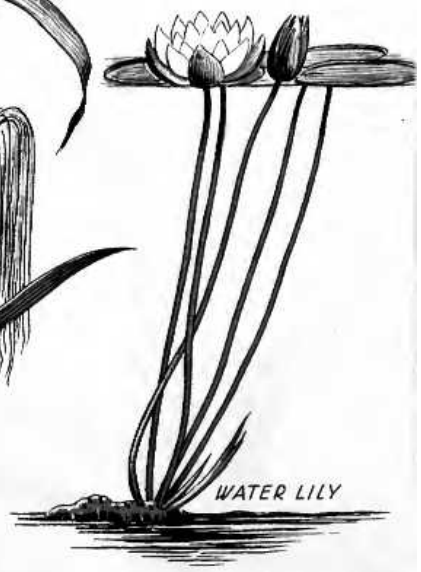
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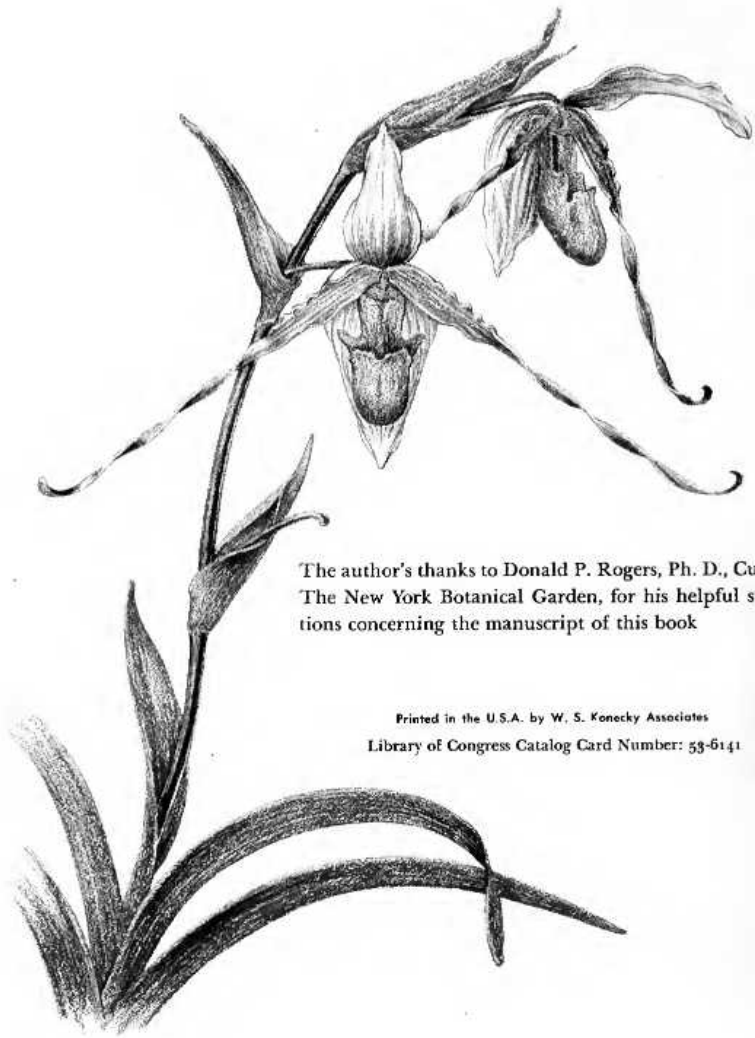
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By ALICE DICKINSON

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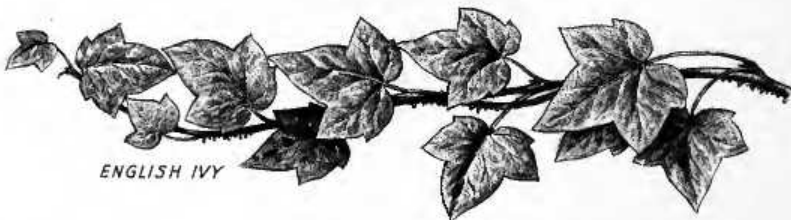
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PLANTS—LIVING AND GROWING

Plants grow almost everywhere in the world around us—in all sizes and shapes. Some are so small that they can be seen only with a microscope. Others, like the redwood trees of California, tower high in the sky. Plants grow not only in well-watered soil, but in oceans, rivers, lakes and swamps, in deserts, on rocks, far above the ground on branches of trees, on old pieces of wood, even on such unlikely things as crusts of bread, old shoes, or on top of arctic snow. Some strange plants eat insects, and others steal food from their neighbors.

Plants and animals are the living, growing things of the earth. Most animals move around, and many of them have sound apparatuses, for making noises. Most plants spend their whole lives silently in one place. Because they live so quietly, we sometimes forget that during their growing seasons they work hard all day long. For plants are just as alive as animals, and they have the same problems: finding and keeping a place to live, getting food, fighting animal enemies and plant rivals,





and having young, so that new plants will grow each year.

Scientists, taking hourly moving pictures of plants, then running them off quickly, have shown how active plants really are—always twisting their stems and turning their leaves toward the sun, stretching out longer, growing new buds, then flowers, and finally seeds. Watch a sunflower as the sun moves across the sky, and see for yourself what happens.

People often think of plants' leaves and flowers as only decorative, and of their fruits as solely for human beings and animals to eat. But for plants themselves, their green leaves, their many-colored flowers, their great variety of fruits—all the things about them—are strictly business, part of the job of keeping alive and providing for new plants.

Plants are fierce rivals. Anyone who has ever weeded a garden knows that often several different kinds of plants are fighting for quarters on the same piece of ground. Each plant has its own special equipment to help it in the hard business of living. Part of the fun of knowing plants is discovering each kind's way of getting along in the world.

