

The Cardinal Flower and the Black-Eyed Susan

By Sally Cureton

Two of the most brilliantly colored flowers of the plant world are with us this month - the Cardinal Flower and the Black-Eyed Susan. Cardinal Flowers can be found in Massanutten at the edge of the little pond near the mail kiosks. It is a member of the bluebell family, but colored bright crimson. The flowers have 5 petals and are about 1½ inches. The plant itself is about 2-4 feet tall. It will be blooming from now until September.

The Cardinal Flower is pollinated chiefly by hummingbirds, since insects have trouble getting into the long tubular flowers. Its name is a reference to the bright red robes worn by Roman Catholic cardinals. We recently purchased many new native plants to put in the Arboretum and this is one that was added down near the old springhouse, where the moist soil should keep it happy.

A large patch of Black-Eyed Susans can be found near the bridge at the Lanier Lane end of the Arboretum. These are very showy plants with their golden-yellow flowers about 2-3 inches wide. The plants themselves will be 1-3 feet tall. It is a native prairie biennial and is a member, of course, of the sunflower family. Two wonderful flowers to be seen now!