

WILDFLOWER WATCH

CREATING AN ALLEGORICAL WORLD OF FLORA AND FAERIES

Derek Norman

Wildflower Watch as a regular column has featured examples of work members have pursued in promoting an educational awareness of native flora through individual initiatives and projects; always citing very specific projects and examples. In this the eighth column in the series, *Wildflower Watch* takes a slightly different tack as we review the work of Pamela Meacher, a Canadian member living in Ontario. Pamela's work is not so specific in promoting native flora but is of a genre that implicitly presents the beauty of native flora mostly through that educational and entertaining medium, the picture book.

Pamela Meacher is a dedicated botanical artist of the Carolinian Forest Region (North America) and has exhibited for many a decade a passion for painting and drawing native flora. After a childhood spent in England, Pamela found herself and her art in Canada. A founding member of the Canadian Wildflower Society, she is a frequent exhibitor. Pamela has exhibited work in London (Royal Horticultural Society), in Canada and the US.



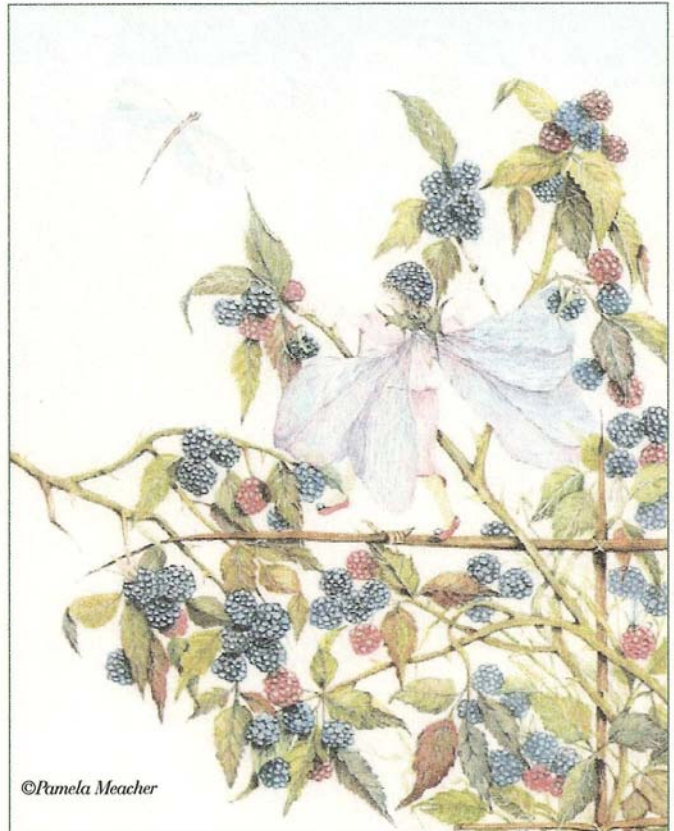
The year 2006 saw the completion of Pamela's five-year project with the publication of *Emily's Enchanted Gardens*, a delightful children's picture book that highlights Pamela's passion for painting botanical and botanically styled works of native flora. It is a rich botanical landscape inhabited by the faeries. They pop-up amongst Great White Trillium (*Trillium grandiflorum*) and lurk high above the Jack-in-the-Pulpit (*Arisaema atrorubens*). They play among the Jewelweed (*Impatiens pallida*),

dance through the Monkshood (*Aconitum uncinatum*), run and skip along the branches of bramble (*Rubus*) and take shelter under the woodland fungi (*Macrolepiota procera*).

Emily's Enchanted Garden harkens back to the Victorian genre of the highly illustrated picture book. In many ways Pamela's work reflects those wonderful Victorian sensibilities that gave birth to the Golden Age of children's book illustration. The poetic qualities of both her words and especially her graphic work evoke the delicate images of Eleanor-Vera Boyle, Richard Doyle's spectacular fairyland fantasy illustrations to William Allingham's *In Fairyland*, and Cicely Mary Barker's ever popular

Flower Faerie – yes, after almost a hundred years it is still available in paperback. And we can hardly forget the incredible fairyland images of Arthur Rackham.

If by now you're thinking the fairy was somehow a propriety image of the English Arts & Crafts Movement, not so. Explore the work of that great unsung heroine Marion Mahony Griffin, the genius behind the drawings of Frank Lloyd Wright (they were, after all, her drawings). Her mural "Faeries feeding the Herons" completed in 1931 shows the genius of merging faerie fantasy with botany.



The work of these Victorian artists, designers, painters, and illustrators reflected Victorian virtues and a passion for faeries, pixies, wood sprites, birds, butterflies, wildflowers and all the creatures of Mother Earth. It is a world that gave birth to the Arts and Crafts Movement, which advanced the many botanical art forms of which we are all the beneficiaries.

The visual legacy of this rich tradition remains in our collective memory and one suspects that for most of us, in this fast paced global village, it triggers a sense of nostalgia for a long-lost innocence and for many a simpler, more reflective way of life. To all those creative giants of that earlier era we owe a debt of gratitude and appreciation for creating a tradition that, thanks to contemporary botanical artists like Pamela and many other designers, continues to this day. Thank you, Pamela.

If you have a story to tell we'd love to hear it. Please e-mail your story to Derek Norman at dereknorman@comcast.net. Please be sure to put Wildflower Watch in the subject line. Thank you.