Some taxonomists divide it into two species, *P. glauca* for the northern form and *P. caroliniana* for the southern form, with the change from one to the other occurring at about the level of Virginia. Another closely related species, *P. asarifolia*, can also be found in this state. Most of my remarks here apply to at least these three forms, and some to the genus as a whole.

All the species of Grass-of-Parnassus have a cluster of basal leaves from which rise slender stalks 8” to 20” high, each bearing a single flower. An unusual and distinctive feature is the single, ovate, olive-green leaf which clasps each flower stem just below the middle like a little shelf. There are five flower petals, white, with conspicuous parallel green veins, and five fertile golden stamens. In addition, between the petals and the stamens are five other bodies, variously called sterile stamens, scales or nectaries. These have a fringe of delicate filaments, each one ending in a knob which glistens in the sunshine and acts as an attractant for pollinating insects. Nectar is secreted at the base of these structures.

*Parnassia* has an ingenious way of ensuring cross-fertilization. After the petals unfold, each anther is raised up by its filament to an erect position only while it dehisces, then it bends down again and the anther shrivels or drops off. Only after all the stamens have performed, the two short styles, which have been previously folded up, separate and their stigmas become capable of pollination. The plants become scentless in the evening, but are scented in bright sunshine, an added stimulus to pollination by day-flying insects.

Grass-of-Parnassus was named by Dioscorides, a Greek doctor who lived in the first century A.D. He wrote a leading treatise on pharmacology called *De Materia Medica* which described the properties of some 600 plants. He was probably well aware that *Parnassia* was not a grass; perhaps he did find it growing as abundantly on the mountain as grass grows in other pastures.

In Virginia, Grass-of-Parnassus likes moist, boggy habitats with a good acid soil. It usually grows in places that are open to the sun but if more shade is provided, it can survive in drier locations, provided the soil is suitable. Without giving further details of its cultivation, however, it must here be emphasized that Grass-of-Parnassus is on the Forest Service’s list of ‘Endangered Wildflowers,’ and therefore all thoughts of transplanting it are strongly to be discouraged. For the sake of Miss Walton, the Forest Service, and a great many others, let us all enjoy this charming and uncommon flower, but in its natural habitat, and undisturbed.