ART APPRECIATION

Please furnish a one-year subscription of your beautiful magazine to my mother. I've enjoyed reading a hand-me-down copy from a co-worker, and wonder if your artist, Lucile Walton, used to teach at George Washington High School in Danville. The art is fantastic — all of it — and Miss Walton was a terrific teacher and artist.

Frances Christianson

Danville

We agree: we're very fortunate to have Miss Walton's lovely illustrations in Virginia Wildlife. Yes, she did teach at George Washington — for 44 years! As a matter of fact, she began as a science teacher and then went on to teach art, so she is well-qualified to illustrate In Nature's Garden; of course, her work speaks for itself. Miss Walton still lives in Danville. — Assistant Editor.

The Wild Rose

BY ELIZABETH MURRAY

When Rupert Brooke wrote a nostalgic poem about the English countryside in spring, he said:

Unkempt about those hedges blows

An English unofficial rose . . .

referring to the pale pink, wild dog rose, Rosa canina, rather than any of the "official" cultivated varieties used on so many English heraldic emblems.

America does not have hedges in the same way that England does. In England, the hedge is an almost nationally characteristic way of edging a field. However, there are in America many wild places where straggly spring shrubs abound, and here we do have a very similar wild rose, Rosa carolina.

The flower of the wild rose is about as close to a standard textbook flower as it is possible to get, indeed it is often featured in elementary texts of botany to demonstrate the normal parts of a flower on which the structure of all other flowering species is based. There are five sepals, five free petals, numerous stamens and a many-carpelled ovary. Leaves are pinnately compound with characteristic stipules at the base. There are pairs of straight prickles on the stems, usually just below the junction of each leaf. The straightness of the prickles distinguishes this species from most other species of wild rose where the prickles are recurved.

But a straightforward botanical description does not do full justice to the Carolina rose, or pasture rose as it is sometimes called. The flowers may be any shade of pink from nearly white to a deep, almost-red color. The base of each petal is usually a lighter shade than the outside. The plants grow from one to three feet high with slender, only slightly-branched stems. Flowers are borne singly at the tip of each stem so the beauty of each one can be appreciated individually. Wild roses like dry, sandy, often rocky soil, and are in bloom in June and July.

Rosa carolina has a widespread distribution up and down the eastern United States and west to Texas, Michigan and Nebraska. Although it is quite common, it is not usually found in large masses, but rather, individual plants straggle along wherever the American equivalent of a "hedge" exists.

The Rosaceae is one of the largest plant families with over 100 genera and about 2,000 species. It is distributed throughout the world, though is most abundant in northern temperate regions.

The genus Rosa has, of course, many cultivated species and every temperate garden in the world probably boasts at least one rose. But our own wild rose can hold its own aesthetically with any of the garden varieties. Although it wilts and drops its petals very quickly after picking, it provides us with a beautiful sight as it grows in the wild, from early to mid-summer.