



“Musing from the Hill” by Susan Crossett

as seen on the *Dunkirk Observer* on Fridays
and the *Jamestown Post-Journal* on Saturdays



An Open and Shut Case

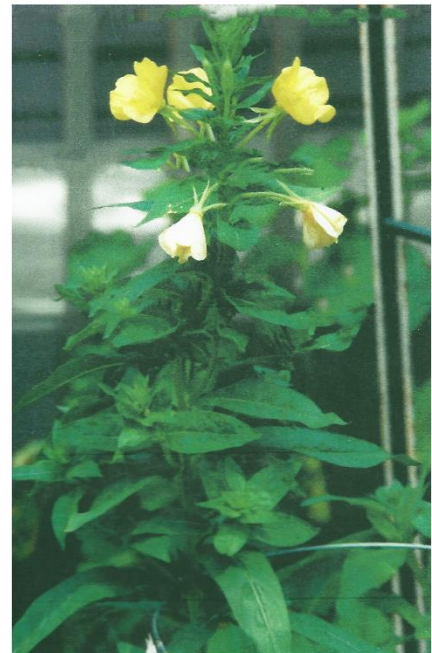
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Sometimes what I find on the internet surprises me.

There are times, when writing these columns, I feel as if I'm stuck in wildflowers and all of those seemingly have something good to offer me. I will accept – and appreciate their beauty and variety while knowing others – not I – are aware of their health benefits. Perhaps you are even one. It's certainly simple to find all the stuff you'd need to know on the internet.

This time, however, when I typed in Evening Primrose, the pharmaceutical offerings popped up long before I could access any notes for the flower itself. So, let's start there.

Oil seems to be what's being pushed. Called a “hypo-allergenic dietary supplement,” E.P.O. (evening primrose oil) comes cold-pressed in softgels that theoretically will provide versatile support for healthy skin, cardiovascular function and, for you youngsters out there, premenstrual comfort. It's recommended (not surprisingly by the E.P.O. people themselves) to be taken as a dietary supplement of one to four capsules daily but in divided dosages (presuming you take more than one). It doesn't seem to matter when you take it – with or without a meal. And of course, the caution: “These statements have not been evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration. This product is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease.” Personally, I'll continue to advise you to stick with what you know . . . or, better yet, check with your doctor. (They always want to know what you're ingesting.) My N.P. authority tells me most of the



vitamins and supplements we take end up undigested in our stomachs, probably on their way to a sewage treatment facility or river somewhere.

Now that that's out of the way, let's look at the flower which is truly attractive.

Peterson seems to turn up his nose at this showy bloom: it's Common (officially) and just “typical of the genus.” Well, typical or not, I like it. The four petals are bright yellow with a cross-shaped stigma and lots of blooms on a single stalk. The



leaves are narrow, just a bit larger than one flower. Or: petals are pale yellow and bowl-shaped. Flowers bloom in multi-flowered terminal panicle. There is a reason for their name for they open in the evening and remain open during the morning. They only close during the heat of the day. So, whether you're a night person or a day person, you may have a chance to see this pretty one.

(Newcomb: Pods are four times longer than broad, leaves lance-shaped, wavy-edged and slightly toothed. As the name implies, they are "common." Look for them on dry soil, open places throughout – roadsides, waste places, just about everywhere, it seems to me.

They sound like a good addition to my garden.

It hadn't occurred to me to wonder how many Broadway shows – or even song titles – have flowers in their names. "Flower Drum Song" comes easily. Ah, come on, songs are easy. Anyone else remember "Sweet Violets"?

It turns out Stephen Sondheim wrote "Evening Primrose" for a 1966 television musical. One can now buy a digitally restored and remastered DVD of the show.

Called a surreal 50-minute musical, the libretto was adapted from a short story by John Collier and is about a poet called Charles Snell (played by "a post-'Psycho' but still creepy Anthony Perkins"). Disillusioned with the real world, Snell chooses to live in a New York City department store with "forty pianos and ten thousand shoes." He discovers the store is full of a community of eccentric hermits able to evade security by acting as mannequins. Once eager to leave, they find they're unable to escape the store and are hunted by "dark men" who don't want their secret society exposed. "The story is whimsical, it's quirky, and it's macabre," says the woman who wrote the liner notes for the DVD.

It was only broadcast once, on November 16, 1966.

Our flower, on the other hand, should appear frequently.

Written July 5, 2021

