



“Musing from the Hill” by Susan Crossett

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



Wildflower or Not?

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All three of my books list sedum as a wildflower but search the internet and you'll find lots of offers for sale.

Sedum comes in a variety of colors: orange, pinks and purples, deep red and even yellow. Since it is as close to an indestructible ground cover as I've found, I may need to investigate more, probably with credit card in hand. I'd rather forgotten it makes a nice houseplant as well.



I started with one small plant – five dollars from Van Bourgondien and planted May ninth, 2001 – that I've encouraged to spread beneath my window. Not a lot but I left that up to it. My gardener friend insists it's great ground cover and can be easily divided. (I'm sorry it's taken two decades for me to find that note.) Twenty years. Well, the good news is it's still there. (My green thumb isn't always.)

I have a vague recollection of moving two small batches to the lower hill. I'd have to dig through the weeds to see if it's still there (this hasn't been my year – so far – for doing half I'd like

outdoors but I should still have time this year to get to dividing).

My sedum is called Stardust, a “winter hardy perennial with thick foliage topped by a cushion of white flowers in late summer. Thrives in a hot sunny spot. Drought tolerant. Zones 3-9.”

Planted in the spring, by September it had flowered. (Not all the things I buy are so lucky.)

Somebody must have suggested that planting a leaf would produce a new plant for in October of '02, I placed 28 pieces in 14 holes. No further mention was noted of that endeavor so I'm guessing it was a failure. Except I did mention there were three separate plants by April 2006.

November '07: a deep maroon but still striking.

Maroon? What happened to those “white”



flowers? My early photographs haven't changed from today – the blossoms are a lovely pink.

That anomaly was obviously short-lived. But interesting.

National Audubon takes us to the Stonecrop Family, Crassulaceae: Succulent herbs or small shrubs, commonly with star-like flowers in branched clusters. There are about 25 genera and 900 species. Many are cultivated as ornamentals or succulent novelties, including Jade Tree, air plants, and stonecrops. Vegetative reproduction is common in the family; in some members, little plantlets grow along the leaf edges, drop to the ground, and root. (I haven't been that fortunate but can keep looking.) Crassulaceae has also been known as the sedum family.

Peterson adds that these low succulent herbs (!) can frequently be seen hugging rocks or cliffs. He numbers gray, white, yellow and pink-red varieties. (The “herbs” is the only mention I found of its being edible but it turns out sedums, or stonecrop, are all edible, with the leaves and the roots both apparently good cooked in stir fries, or used in stocks and soups. (They are mucilaginous so good thickeners.) Some people use them in salads.



Audubon continues “this coarse plant, a European introduction, frequently escapes from cultivation. It can regenerate from almost any fragment, hence the common name. Children like to separate outer leaf layers to form little “balloon purses.” (Boy! Did I miss out on that part of my childhood!)

Checking out the wild ones, Newcomb says the Live-forevers are plants with fleshy, coarsely toothed leaves. The star-shaped flowers are purple, pink or white, about 1/4” wide, in cymes. Live-forever (I need more plants with that name, don't I?) – pink-purple flowers, leaves green, 8-30” high. Roadsides and fields, escaped from cultivation. (I also have also i.d.'d the Wild Live-forever with pale-pink or white flowers and



whitened leaves. The leaves have fewer teeth than those of the Live-forever. 6-16” high. Cliffs and rocks, Pa. To Ill. South.) Guess New York creeps in there as well.

Having checked out my three authorities in print, I'm beginning to suspect my plants may well be more wild than not.

Written August 13, 2021