

10-6-97

Dear Janet,

Thank you for your letter of October 1, which arrived on this very warm sunny afternoon. I watched a couple of monarch butterflies as they flew about and lighted on the bright pink blossoms of my New England aster, Alma Putschke. I hope you have some of these. Laura disapproves of very tall plants and cuts hers back early in the summer, but I think they do better if they get very long: more flowers. The stems are strong and flexible, I like to see them bow a little ~~under~~ ^{under} the weight of the butterfly. Anyway, it's a wonderful jazzy color clash.

I'm glad that I recognized Freight Boat. We're all rather worn out. I'm glad that ~~if~~ you can't throw her away. How Papa enjoyed quoting your parental admonition: "See, Freight Boat! See what happens!"

I'm sorry to have been so incoherent about the plants I mentioned: Joe Pyeweed is as you politely suggest, quite a different species from N.Y. Ironweed. Joe Pye is in the Eupatorium family along with

Poreset and Snakeroot. Joe Pye Weed is the one that does best with its roots near a stream; ~~or~~ Ironweed is in the Vernonia family and seems to thrive in very dry areas.

As for "Sweet fern", I finally came across its name in one of my old journals. It is Comptonia peregrina, and is not a fern at all, but a sort of shrub, which I believe propagates by sending out new shoots from its roots (~~stollen~~ ^{stolon}) like a Sassafras or aspen.

It is not in any of my books; I have not been able to find a copy of the large Symonds book on Shrubs & vines, and perhaps I don't really need to add another book to my large library. I love Comptonia

peregrina. ^{certainly for its name} partly for its odor, partly because I stepped on it so often before I could identify it. I believe it is named in

honor of Henry Compton, Bishop of London. ^{mentioned} ~~named~~ in Joseph Kastner's book,

A Species of Eternity p. 10, 11 and ff. a wonderful book.