

NO BRUSH, NO LATHER—

---But Lots of Flowers in His Garden

From the Christian Science Monitor

THE WELL-DRESSED MAN whom visitors to the Eloise Butler Wild Flower garden in Minneapolis see pulling weeds every week-end except in the dead of winter is not the superintendent of parks. Five days a week he is the chairman of the board of the shaving cream company (Burma Shave) which adorns the roadside with jingles designed to discourage traffic accidents and encourage shavers to remove their whiskers with his products.

Clinton Odell, disciple of Thoreau (he's read twice all 20 volumes of Thoreau's works), finds the development of a public wild flower garden far more satisfying than playing golf. While fellow businessmen are out digging holes in the turf on their favorite links, Odell is digging holes to plant some choice specimen just received from a distant part of the country. Thanks to his digging in his pockets as well as in the ground, the Eloise Butler Wild Flower garden is considered by many the most remarkable in any public park and one of the most unusual in the country.

Odell traces his interest in wild flowers back to his school days. "Forty-odd years ago Eloise Butler was my high school natural science teacher," he tells us. "She used to take groups of us out to what is now called Theodore Wirth park, for experiments on mosquitoes. She and a few other teachers had received permission from the park board to use a portion of the park for botanizing. They used to go out there in their spare time and collect and plant specimens for their own observation. I just got interested in going out there in the spring to see what came up.

"In those days it was the popular idea that wild flowers didn't need to be cultivated like tame ones. Most people thought that the wilder the setting, the better the plants like it. Miss Butler thought so, too. When she retired from teaching and was given a park board assignment of developing a wild flower garden which would represent all Minnesota wild plants. She felt that weeds should be represented, too.

"But the barbarian weeds soon took over and destroyed the choicer plants. Botanists have now learned that many wild flowers are displaced plants growing in sandy soil because they've been pushed out of their natural habitat by weeds or grasses. They need protection, proper soil, and cultivation even more than their tame relatives."

After Miss Butler died in 1933, the garden was named for her. Mrs. W. H. Crone, who had been helping Miss Butler for many years as a hobby, took charge of the garden.

When Odell found Mrs. Crone waging a losing battle on the 20-acre front against the encroaching weeds, he contributed the services of two sturdy men and worked with them to make his former teacher's dream come true.

He added a fence to the garden in order to preserve the flowers from picnickers who didn't un-

derstand or marauders who didn't care. He helped make a watering and drainage system possible so that the flowers need not suffer from either too much or too little rain.

Odell's face lights up as he discusses his hobby in his office while vats of shaving cream churned in the adjacent factory. "We've got a perfect spot for a wild flower garden," he explains, "because every variety of terrain is represented, from the swamp and three artificial lakes to wooded hill-sides and open upland fields. Even the soil has the right amount of acidity. We've enlarged the original plan of keeping it a purely Minnesota gar-



CLINTON ODELL

The garden of his dreams

den and are experimenting with plants from other parts of the country.

"Every northern wild flower can grow here except mountain flowers, and we are trying out some of them. We've established contacts all over the nation for exchange of seeds and plants.

"New specimens are planted in beds so they won't be crowded out by the grass and so we can cover them in winter. And we've built fire lanes to prevent a spreading forest fire."

Last year 18,000 visitors passed through the gate to this outdoor museum, many of them children with their teachers. From April 1, when the snow trillium push out from beneath the moist blankets of last year's leaves to Oct. 15 when the golden-rod and wild asters flaunt their gay colors from the uplands, the garden is a procession of bright displays.