



Ririro

READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

Uneatable Fruits

Mrs. William Starr Dana

Perhaps one day you bit into the fruit of the rose, and found it sour and unpleasant to the taste. You may have forgotten that not long ago you learned a new meaning for the word "fruit." Possibly you still fancy that a fruit must be something good to eat. So many people have this idea, that once more I wish to make clear to you that the fruit is the seed-holding part of the plant.

Whether this part is good to eat or not, makes no difference as to its being a fruit.

The apple is a fruit, you remember, not because it is good to eat, but because it holds the seeds of the apple tree.

And for this same reason the pear is a fruit. It is the case in which is laid the seedbox of the pear tree. This case, when ripe, happens to be juicy and delicious; but it would be quite as much a fruit if it were dry and hard, and without taste.

And so the rose hip is a fruit, because it is the case which holds the little seedboxes of the rose flower.

What is the fruit of the milkweed?

All country children know the milkweed plant, with its big bright leaves, and bunches of pink or red or purple flowers. And you know the puffy pods that later split open, letting out a mass of brown, silky-tailed seeds. There! I have given the answer to my own question; for if the plant's fruit is the seed-holding part, then the milkweed's fruit must be this pod stuffed full of beautiful, fairy-like seeds.



Then you know the burdock which grows along the country road. But perhaps you do not know that the fruit of this is the prickly burr which hooks itself to your clothes on your way to school. This burr is the case which holds the little seeds of the burdock, and so it must be its fruit.



The fruit of the dandelion is the silvery puffball or "clock," by blowing at which you try to tell the time of day. If you pull off one of the feathery objects which go to make up the puffball, at its lower end you see a little dandelion seedbox.



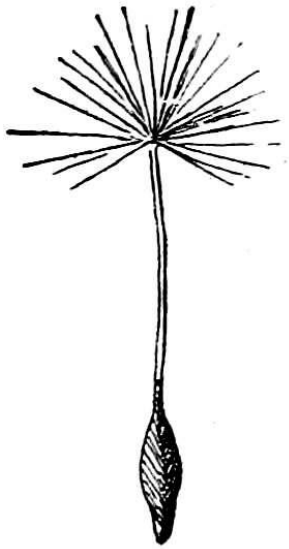
And these fall days, along the roadsides and in the woods, everywhere you see fruits which you will hardly know as such unless you keep in mind the true meaning of the word.

Many of these I am sure you would not care to eat. The burr from the burdock would not make a pleasant mouthful. Neither would you like to breakfast on a milkweed pod. And a quantity of dandelion puffballs would hardly add to the enjoyment of your supper.



If you should tell your mother you had brought her some fruit, and should show her a basket of burrs and pods, she would think you were only joking, and perhaps a little foolish; and I dare say she would be greatly surprised to find you were using the word quite rightly.





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