

Chicory flower matches the sky

By Timothy Nowicki
special writer

The arrival of summer also means the arrival of a very common wildflower named chicory or succory. Introduced to the United States by Europeans, it has spread across the country.

As I drive to work in the morning, I can see chicory blooming in vacant lots, along railroad tracks and at the curbside where lawmowers can't reach.

It's an easy plant to identify. Chicory's flowers are about 1 1/2 inches in diameter. They emerge from the base of leaves along the stem. The tip of each petal is jagged, which has led some people to call the plant "ragged sailor."

THE COLOR of the flower inspired Ralph Waldo Emerson to write, "Chicory to match the sky." To me the medium powder blue color does seem to reflect the clear morning summer sky.

In the afternoon, however, I do not see the sky blue flowers except on cool, overcast days. Chicory flowers will close up at mid-day and will not open again until the next morning.

Chicory has a distinctive appearance. During my drive home from work, I can still identify chicory plants by their sparse branching and thick stems. The stems are thick enough to

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penetrate all winter long. Chicory is well known to people in the southern states because they use the roasted roots as a coffee or as a coffee supplement. This may be the reason it was introduced to this country by Europeans.

TODAY THOUSANDS of pounds of chicory are imported into the U.S. for use as a coffee supplement. What is curious is that the chicory now growing in the U.S. is the same as what we are importing.

In addition to the roots, the young leaves can be eaten as a salad green, but the elder they become, the more bitter the taste.

So whether you enjoy chicory for the coffee flavor, the salad greens or the beauty of its flowers, take a look along the roadside on your way to work tomorrow. Chances are you will see a flower to match the sky.

Shoplifting: Illness or lame alibi?

Shoplifting has received a great deal of attention in the press lately.

A popular misconception is that thievery is restricted to the poor. Whenever people hear of a case in which an affluent or important person has shoplifted, they assume there must be a psychological hangup to have prompted the person to commit such a senseless act.

Actually, the impoverished have no monopoly on dishonesty. One study of senior citizens suggested that the chances of shoplifting increase with the amount of a person's income.

SHOPLIFTING is an extremely common occurrence in modern society. In one study in Great Britain, supermarket customers were randomly selected and closely observed while shopping. One out of 49 was observed shoplifting. The frequency of shoplifting in this country may be even higher.

For a small percentage of shoplifters — perhaps 5 to 10 percent — there are emotional problems which are related to the shoplifting.

A few of these shoplifters are classic kleptomaniacs who crave after the plea-



psychology
Dennis Sugrue

sure associated with the risk or who find that internal pressure can only be released through stealing. A troubled adolescent may use shoplifting, especially being caught shoplifting, as an indirect way of expressing anger toward the parents.

THERE IS growing evidence that shoplifting may be an early sign of depression.

For example, a person experiencing guilt may unconsciously desire to be caught and punished. At an unconscious level, the motivation is a "watered down" version of the same dynamic that prompts suicide — a desire to punish self and others.

For the distraught individual, being caught shoplifting also may uncon-

sciously represent the necessary step for help from a distressed family.

DURING A recent telephone interview, I was asked why someone who is neither poor, nor emotionally disturbed, nor basically dishonest would risk their reputation for some insignificant piece of merchandise.

Many shoplifters of this variety would never think of cheating their neighbor, yet do not consider petty shoplifting wrong. Their rationale is similar to the mentality associated with driving faster than the speed limit or padding an expense account or claim-

ing fictitious charitable contributions on an income tax return. Yes, they regard the law, but not as binding.

For this type of shoplifting, the act is a crime, but the person's decision to act is thought to be a result of a lack of empathy. One simply believes oneself in good conscience and is only sorry for the material consequences of getting something for nothing.

Although shoplifting is becoming a common phenomenon, it is seldom the result of serious emotional problems. Rather, the high incidence of shoplifting is likely a reflection of the care with which many people today can rationalize away the significance of dishonest acts.

Dennis Sugrue is a clinical psychologist at Henry Ford Hospital. He welcomes questions and topics for future articles but is unable to answer questions on an individual basis. Questions and topics may be sent to this newspaper.

Coin firsts

Two important firsts are happening. The United States government, for the first time in 50 years, will issue a gold coin and the U.S. Mint will strike the first Olympic Commemorative coinage ever issued by our country.

The silver and gold coins are being sold to support America's present and future Olympic teams and to help stage the 1984 Olympic Summer

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