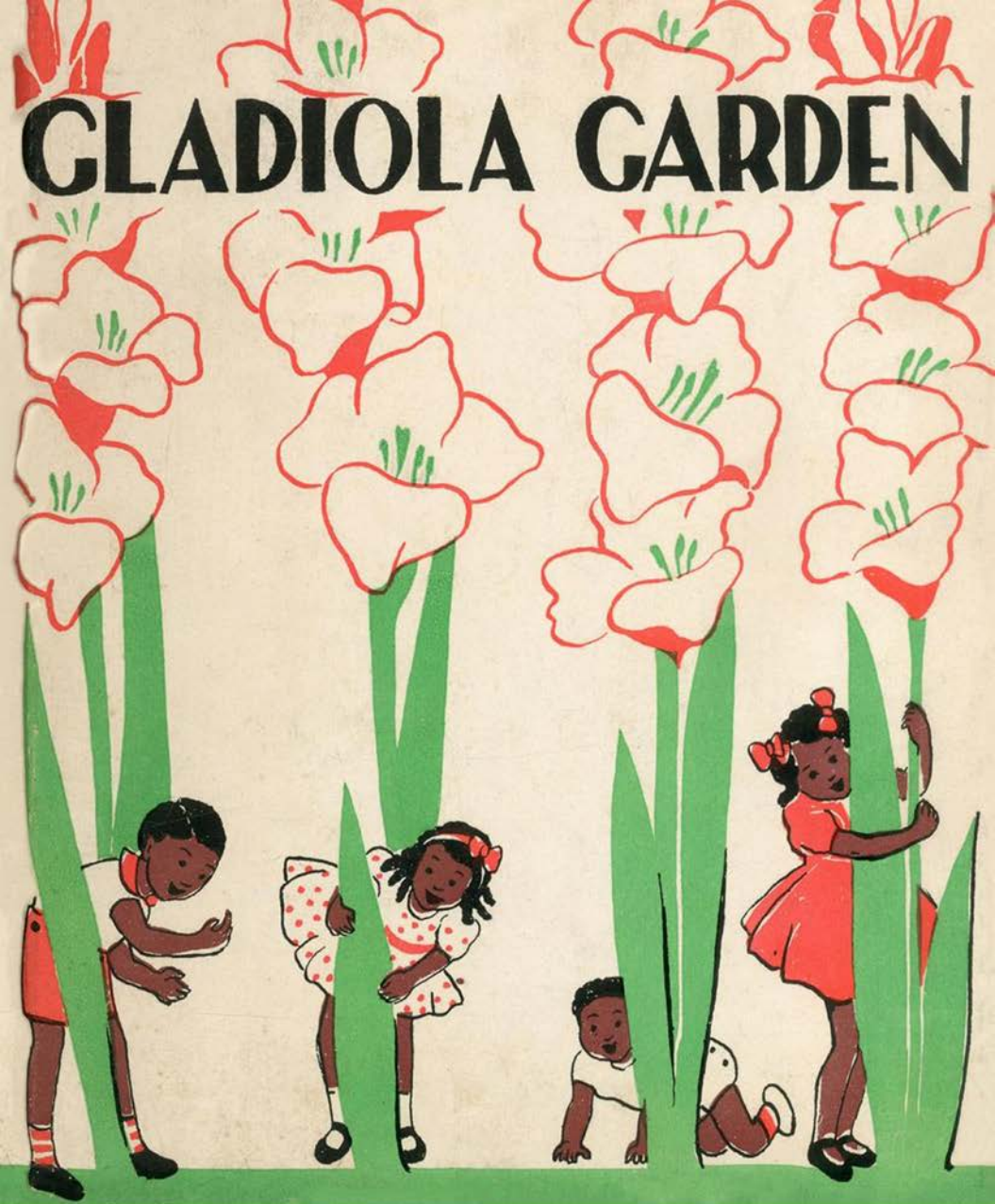


GLADIOLA GARDEN



WORLD  VOICES

GLADIOLA GARDEN

Effie Lee Newsome



GLADIOLA GARDEN

POEMS OF OUTDOORS AND INDOORS
FOR SECOND GRADE READERS

BY

EFFIE LEE NEWSOME



ILLUSTRATIONS BY
LOIS MAILOU JONES



A FOREWORD

From time to time a letter from Mrs. Newsome has come to me, always with a little poem, and from time to time I have discovered other poems of hers, in the pages of anthologies and newspapers, and always they gave me such pleasure that I was happy to learn that her verse was to be presented in a book. She has written it especially for children, but it will have charm and significance for grown-ups. The spirit of kindness, of gentle insight, and of quiet understanding underlies even the gayest of her fantasies. I feel that she makes a very real contribution, not only to verse for children but to the spirit of our time.

—Mary Hastings Bradley.

FOREWORD

When I began to introduce my children to poetry as a daily practice within our homeschool, I was struck by the homogeneity of the sweet images included within the pages of our favorite poetry books. As I read more, I heard familiar refrains and verses that struck on the many shared emotions of humanity – joy, fear, love, discomfort, belonging. But none celebrated the unique experiences of Black children and their meanderings through field and forest alongside the crickets and toads.

Feeling certain that poetry reflecting my children and their attachment to the natural world was somewhere to be found, I began a hopeful search telling myself that diligent effort would perhaps pay out in the end. And boy, did it ever.

Tucked away in the middle of a literature guide, originally published in 1941, was a passing reference to *Gladiola Garden* by Effie Lee Newsome with a brief description of “Poems for younger children by a Negro poet and artist.” I had come to trust the guide’s author, Charlemae Rollins, the head of the children’s department in the first branch of the Chicago library system built in a Black neighborhood, so it was easy to follow the trail she left behind so many years ago. And sure enough, at the end of the line awaited a treasure of poems that spoke to my children, my adult sensibilities, and the little girl inside of me who had longed to see herself within the pages of a special book.

As my family soaked up the richness of Harlem Renaissance writer Effie Lee Newsome and illustrator Lois Mailou Jones, it became apparent that this volume was too plum a treasure to hold as our own. It needed to be in the home of every child – as a mirror reflecting the everyday life recognized as their own or a window giving a rare view into the playful romps and observations of brown-skinned children.

So with a thankful spirit and steadfast commitment to bring forth voices and images that will pour into the lives of so many young people, I leave you with this pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. May *Gladiola Garden* bless you and yours as it has me and mine.

AMBER O’NEAL JOHNSTON
HeritageMom.com

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GLADIOLA GARDEN

In red and orange, cream and rose
The happy GLADIOLA grows
In slim green boots,
In tall green rows.
There are so many colors here,
So many tints, so much good cheer!

O little girl, O little boy,
In gardens of mixed shades, much joy,
One really has to think of you,
For you are many colors too,
In cheery dresses, suits and shoes
And those gay-colored hats you choose,
With light and gladness in your faces,
You make through earth
Gay garden places.







INSECTS AND SPIDERS



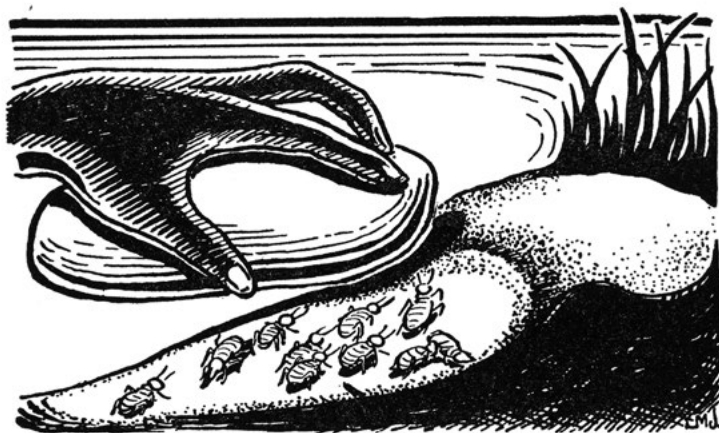
HOMES

The monarch butterfly
Is born in royal halls
With golden glints of light
Swung round the green glazed walls.

But bagworm houses, although strong,
Are crude as homes of pioneers,
And look as though they'd swung right there
From willow boughs for years and years.

It's the log cabin, I'm quite sure,
Among the moths and butterflies—
Tough silk with bits of twig stuck on,
All gray and almost of one size.





INSECT FOLK

I only have to lift a stone
Up from the soft gray ground
To start the gayest insect folk
To bustling all around.

And often when I peel the bark
From off some brown old tree
A host of small white bugs trots out
Almost immediately.

They seem to have all sorts of plans,
And everywhere to go.
And off they rush, one after one,
Like autos in a row.

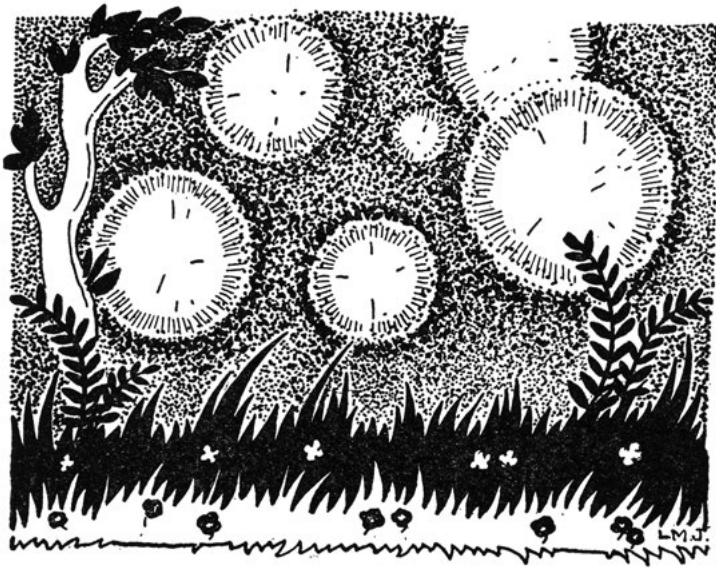
SWINGS

A spider swung into the air
Upon a silver swing.
My swing is rope, and has a seat,
And out I sweep with lifted feet.
It's such an easy thing!

No easier than the spiders sway
On bits of web and float away
Much farther than my rope swing goes
All over gardens sweet with rose.

I'm certain I would like to try
Some such strange way to speed through sky.
In rope swings you just go and come
Straight back to where you started from.





TWO FIREFLY SONGS

The firefly
Goes flashing by,
A lemon-golden spark,
A dancing rhinestone in the sky,
A jewel in the dark.

Has there been some great fete today?
Here's gold confetti in night's skies,
Which darts and glows in such a way
I really think it's fireflies.

STRANGE

I never see the cricket,
But hear it every night.
I never hear the firefly,
But see its glowing light.

THE WALK

A ladybird went for a walk
Up in a great French horn,
And wandered round and round and round
Until her feet were worn.





IN THE GRASS

Sometimes I lie in meadow grass,
And watch all kinds of insects pass
In brown and red and gray.
Some very busy ants speed by
With white crumb bundles stacked up high,
All hastening in one way.

Each hurries with his heavy load
Up what I call the Cricket Road,
It looks so cool and dark.
There's pleasant millet growing there,
And wisps of fox-grass everywhere
That I use as a cane

To push along some lazy bug,
That lags without a load to lug
Along the insect lane.
And bugs keep coming on and on—
New bands before the old have gone.
Sometimes one comes alone.

A grasshopper quick, proud and lean
Leaps to the millet, tall and green,
And takes it for his throne.

Sometimes a beetle blunders past
Or stops awhile, then starts out, fast,
As though he'd heard a call.

Sometimes a soft green worm drags by,
Then winds beneath a millet sky,
And can't be seen at all.
Each worm and bug moves on its way.
Some tap the grass, as though in play.
But I like best the ants' long string
Returning from their marketing.

JOHNNY GREENJACKET

Johnny Greenjacket, a grasshopper, gay,
Gave a great banquet one midsummer day.
The geese were all present, some quail
 and a pheasant—
This part is unpleasant—
While waiting for dinner, just after the toast,
The guests became hungry,
And ate up their host.



THE HAWKMOTHS

The hawkmoths come to evening tea
Within the honeysuckle vine.
The guests all day have been the bee.
The flowers like humming guests, I see.

SPIDER DRESS

I've seen some spiders working hard
Dressed in black velvet blouses,
Building their bridges of silk thread,
Silk highways and silk houses.
But I, when working for my mother,
Wear just some common frock or other.

