

Key: C Maj.
♩ = 90

Wildwood Flower

Traditional (sort of)*
Arr. Pete Showman (et al.)

The musical score is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 2/4 time signature. It consists of four staves of music. The first staff begins with a C chord, followed by G and C. The second staff begins with C, G, and C. The third staff begins with C, F, and C. The fourth staff begins with C, G, C, and ends with D.C. (Da Capo). There are asterisks under the final notes of the first, second, and fourth staves, indicating they are often stretched.

** These 'C' notes at the ends of lines are often stretched as shown, adding extra "turnaround" measures.

Emmylou Harris and Iris Dement lyrics

(www.youtube.com/watch?v=7_x9B__0rgE)

1. I will twine and will mingle my raven black hair
With the roses so red and the lilies so fair,
And the myrtle so bright with an emerald hue
The pale emanita and hyssop so blue.***
2. Oh, he taught me to love him and called me his flower
A blossom to cheer him through life's weary hour
Now my heart is now wondering no misery can tell
He left me no warning no words of farewell
3. I will dance I will sing and my life shall be gay
I will charm every heart in the crowd I will sway
Though my heart is now breaking he never shall know
How his name makes me tremble my pale cheeks to glow
4. Oh, he taught me to love him and promised to love
And cherish me over all others above
Oh, I long to see him and regret the dark hour
He's gone and neglected this frail wildwood flower

"Mother" Maybelle Carter's lyrics

1. Oh, I'll twine with my mingles and waving black hair
With the roses so red and the lilies so fair
And the myrtles so bright with emerald dew
The pale and the leader and eyes look like blue.
2. Oh, I'll dance, I will sing and my laugh shall be gay
I will charm ev'ry heart, in his crown I will sway
When I woke from my dreaming, idols were clay
All portions of love then had all flown away.
3. Oh, he taught me to love him and promised to love
And to cherish me over all others above
How my heart now is wond'ring misery can tell
He's left me no warning, no words of farewell.
4. Oh, he taught me to love him and called me his flow'r
That was blooming to cheer him through life's dreary
hour.
Oh, I'm longing to see him through life's dark hour
He's gone and neglected this pale wildwood flower.

* *Wildwood Flower* was popularized by the Carter Family, particularly as sung by "Mother" Maybelle Carter in a 1928 recording. Maybelle said she had learned the song as a youngster, from her grandmother. It's believed that it was originally a song called *I'll Twine 'Mid the Ringlets*, copyrighted in 1860. The music, similar to the melody above, was by J.P. Webster. The lyricist was "Maud Irving," likely a pseudonym for the poet J. William Van Namee (see Eric M. Bram's article, *The Mystery of Maud Irving (the "Wildwood Flower")*), at www.ergo-sum.net/music/MaudIrving.html, and the original sheet music, at www.ergo-sum.net/music/Twine'MidTheRinglets.pdf.)

Maybelle Carter later said some of the words had "gotten mixed up" and that "they don't make much sense in a few places in the song." Many variations out there attempt to correct that, and there's much discussion on the Web about what the lyrics "should be" -- but no real answers. The online version of this transcription (at www.fiddlers.org/tunes/) also has the original published lyrics to "Mid the Ringlets" for comparison, from Wikipedia and Peter Wernick's "Bluegrass Songbook".

*** In the original, "The pale aronatus with eyes of bright blue." But "aronatus" is not a known flower name. Some sing "pale amanita" or "pale emanita", and sometimes "and islip so blue," but neither "emanita" nor "islip" is a recognized flower. "Amanita" is an often-poisonous mushroom (with no blue 'eyes'). Hyssop has blue flowers, but is not native to the U.S.

Arr. and typeset in ABC by Pete Showman, text revised 4/7/2016 (rev 4)

(Wildwood Flower, continued)

* Though the song was popularized in the 20th Century by the Carter Family, it seems to be based on this song, published in 1860. The song was handed down orally (and garbled in places) within the Carter Family. The music for this older song was by J.P. (Joseph Philbrick) Webster. The lyrics were by "Maud Irving", and were apparently taken from a poem, also by "Maud Irving," published somewhat earlier in a women's magazine of the time. (Maud Irving is believed to be a pseudonym for the poet J. William Van Namee; see Eric M. Bram's article *The Mystery of Maud Irving (the "Wildwood Flower")* at www.ergo-sum.net/music/MaudIrving.html). There are references to the poem, but the poem itself has apparently been lost. You can see the original song here: www.ergo-sum.net/music/Twine'MidTheRinglets.pdf

Note: Music composer J.P. Webster also wrote the Civil War era song "Lorena".

I'LL TWINE 'MID THE RINGLETS

Lyrics by Maud Irving, music by J.P. Webster

**1. I'll twine 'mid the ringlets of my raven black hair,
The lilies so pale and the roses so fair,
The myrtle so bright with an emerald hue,
And the pale aronatus++ with eyes of bright blue.**

**2. I'll sing, and I'll dance, my laugh shall be gay,
I'll cease this wild weeping, drive sorrow away,
Tho' my heart is now breaking, he never shall know,
That his name made me tremble and my pale cheeks to glow.**

**3. I'll think of him never, I'll be wildly gay,
I'll charm ev'ry heart, and the crowd I will sway,
I'll live yet to see him regret the dark hour
When he won, then neglected, the frail wildwood flower.**

**4. He told me he loved me, and promis'd to love,
Through ill and misfortune, all others above,
Another has won him; ah! misery to tell;
He left me in silence, no word of farewell.**

**5. He taught me to love him, he call'd me his flower
That blossom'd for him all the brighter each hour;
But I woke from my dreaming, my idol was clay;
My visions of love have all faded away.**

++ Originally "aronatus" but there seems to be no such flower, so perhaps it was an error (mis-spelling?) on the part of the poet / lyricist. Some suggest that "amaranthus" is more logical. But most of those are strongly colored, not "pale", nor do they have "blue eyes". Another guess at what was meant is "amanita" (the mushroom family that includes the poisonous mushroom known as the "Death Cap"). Some, but not all, are pale -- but still no "blue eyes". And why would a woman put mushrooms in her hair, poisonous or not?