

MALLOW FAMILY ALBUM

MALVACEAE

“Freshest, Finest, Fairy Cheeses!”

Obviously entranced by the resemblance of some mallow seeds to tiny wheels of cheese, poet and artist Cicely Mary Barker imagined a world where fairies and elves feast on them. And a common weedy mallow, *Malva neglecta*, also goes by the name “cheeses.”

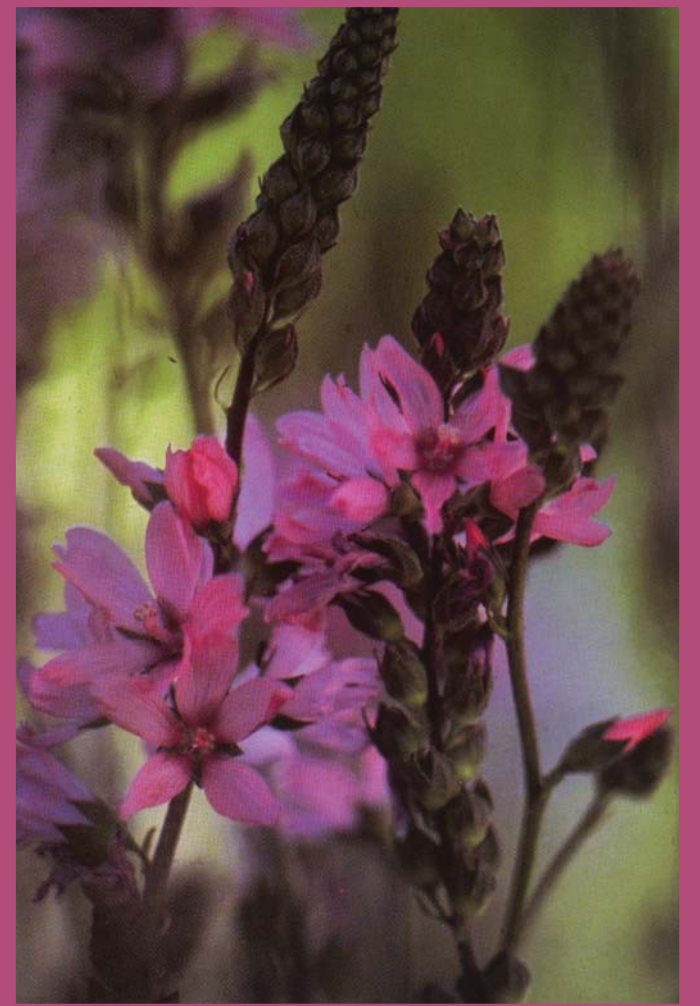
Evocative of tropical paradise, mallows include the hibiscus and its relatives, all well-known for having some of the boldest and showiest flowers. Recent

research at the molecular level reveals that ranks of the mallow family now include some distant cousins: cacao, the linden tree, cola nut, and baobab.

The roots of the marsh mallow, *Althaea officinalis*, provided the original gelatinous base for marshmallow candy. Although the plant product is no longer used in manufacturing the candy, the name “marshmallow” has persisted. The most important economic plants in the family besides cacao (chocolate) are cotton and okra.



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