

THE ALVA FLOWER

by Richard Workman

I wonder how many communities in Florida are named after native plants.

East of Fort Myers on the Caloosahatchee River is the small community of Alva, named more than a century ago by a Danish naturalist, Captain Peter Nelson. The name, presumably from the Danish language, refers to the white *sabatia* (*Sabatia brevifolia*).

The genus *Sabatia* was named by Michel Adanson to honor the Italian botanist, Sabbatia. Adanson did most of his botanizing in Senegal, Africa. The genus *Adansonia* includes the well-known African baobab tree.

Sabatia is properly pronounced with the accent on the middle long *a* (sab-a'ti-a). Webster provides a second pronunciation that is acceptable and often heard: the *ti* is replaced with an *shi* sound.

The town of Alva has a museum. To generate funds for its upkeep, the Alva Library Association and the Alva Garden Club have produced large-size note cards featuring a full-color photograph of the native white *sabatia* wildflower, taken by Dr. Luther Oehlbeck. They are being sold, eight to a package, for \$4.25 including tax, plus \$1.00 for postage and handling. You may order them from



Mrs. Alice English, English Lane, Alva, Florida 33920.

After purchasing some of these beautiful note cards, you'll have a vested interest in this quaint rural community, and will want to stop in to visit the

museum on your next trip through Alva.

If anyone knows of other communities named after Florida native plants, please send the information to *The Palmetto*.