

Spring Wildflowers *of* Black Hawk Forest



All photos taken by the author. For more information on the flora of the Quad Cities Region visit gcology.net where this booklet is also available for free.

*A pocket guide to Black Hawk Forest's
most common and charismatic spring flora*

By Grant Fessler

April, 2023



Dutchman's Breeches (*Dicentra cucullaria*)

This is one of the most abundant spring ephemerals in our area. Its upside-down pantaloony-shaped flowers are unmistakable. Dutchman's breeches is a favorite food source of queen bumblebees when they emerge in early spring.



Cut-leaved Toothwort (*Cardamine concatenata*)

Once the early spring leaves of spring beauty emerge, cut-leaved toothwort is usually next to arrive. Flowering plants have three palmately-lobed leaves in a whorl beneath the flowers. The petals can be white to pale-pink.



Bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*)

A charming early spring bloomer. Bloodroot produces flowers with white, pointed petals. The leaf is often still curled around the flower stem during bloom. Like many wildflowers, this species will close its petals when the sun is not shining.



White Trout Lily (*Erythronium albidum*)

Often forming large colonies, this species is known to carpet the ground with its pale-green, mottled leaves. It can take several years before a trout lily flowers. On warm, sunny days, the 6 tepals bend back sharply to invite pollinators to the flower.



False Rue-Anemone (*Enemion biternatum*)

Not to be confused with rue-anemone, *false rue-anemone* consistently has 5 white, petal-like sepals, and its leaves are deeply lobed. Look for this plant in rich, moist woods and low, wooded areas along streams.



Spring Beauty (*Claytonia virginica*)

This dainty yet eye-catching plant is consistently the first wildflower to emerge in the spring. Its flowers open and close with the sun, and it is an important food source for the earliest pollinators. Note the narrow, almost grass-like leaves.



Rue-Anemone (*Thalictrum thalictroides*)

This species is commonly found in higher and drier situations compared to false rue-anemone. This "true" rue-anemone consistently has more than 5 white petal-like sepals. Note the blunt lobes on the leaves.



Sharp-lobed Hepatica (*Hepatica acutiloba*)

Sharp-lobed hepatica is a characteristic plant of cool, moist, and rich slopes. Note the pointed tips on the lobes of its leaves (right). Like woodland phlox, this species also bears evergreen leaves.





Wild Geranium (*Geranium maculatum*)

The blooms of wild geranium pick up when the first round of flowers have finished in mid to late spring. When the seeds are ripe, they are flung from their capsules up to several feet away.



Woodland Phlox (*Phlox divaricata*)

This common woodland wildflower is distinguished by its five-lobed flowers and opposite leaves. A white-flowered form may occasionally be seen in our area. Woodland phlox can often be observed during winter, as it produces sterile shoots that remain green throughout the year.



Bluebells (*Mertensia virginica*)

Bluebells are one of our largest and showiest spring wildflowers. Their flowers are trumpet-shaped and, as their name suggests, are light blue in color. You may occasionally see a white flowered plant, too. Bluebells are most abundant in wooded areas on low, moist soils along streams, but they occasionally call the uplands their home.



Common Blue Violet (*Viola sororia*)

This is the common violet that grows in lawns. It is also a native species of woodlands in eastern North America. Not only does this violet produce open-pollinated (chasmogamous) flowers in the spring, but it also produces self-pollinated (cleistogamous) flowers, which lack petals, during the summer.



Virginia Waterleaf (*Hydrophyllum virginianum*)

This is an abundant woodland plant which prefers rich, moist soil. The leaves emerge early, and it blooms during mid to late spring. The young leaves often have whitish watermark-like splotches, thus the common name “waterleaf.”



Wild Ginger (*Asarum canadense*)

This plant is easily recognized by its heart-shaped leaves that lie close to the ground. The rhizomes have a ginger-like aroma and flavor. Look beneath the leaves



for its unique maroon flowers in mid to late spring (right).



Prairie Trillium (*Trillium recurvatum*)

This is our most common Trillium species. It is distinguished by its mottled leaves (which are not actually true leaves but modified bracts!), a sessile flower with maroon petals, and strongly bent back (recurved) sepals. Despite its common name, this Trillium grows most often in woodlands.



Largeflower Bellwort (*Uvularia grandiflora*)

When in flower, this plant is unmistakable. The nodding flowers with twisted yellow tepals light up like gold on a sunny spring afternoon. Look for it in rich woods.



Yellow Violet (*Viola pubescens*)

This is the only native violet with yellow flowers in our area. Unlike the common blue violet which has all basal leaves, this species has flowering stems with leaves emerging from them.



Small-flowered Buttercup (*Ranunculus abortivus*)

This is a common species of woodlands and occasionally volunteers in shaded residential areas. It produces tiny flowers about ¼ inch wide with yellow petals. The lower leaves are round to kidney shaped, middle leaves are 3-5 lobed, and the upper leaves are usually long and narrow.



Hispid Buttercup (*Ranunculus abortivus*)

This buttercup prefers to grow in moist situations such as in seeps or on streambanks, but it will also grow in drier upland woods. It produces bright yellow, shiny petals and has compound leaves.



Mayapple (*Podophyllum peltatum*)

Mayapples are amongst the first species of plants to emerge in the spring. They gradually rise from the ground and unfurl their umbrella-like leaves. Flowering plants will produce two leaves with a drooping white flower between them. The flower turns into a round fruit which is highly prized by wildlife.



Jack-in-the-pulpit (*Arisaema triphyllum*)

Jack-in-the-pulpit is one of the later species to emerge in the spring. It produces one or two sets of compound leaves, each with three leaflets. The flower is made up of a club-like structure (“jack”) inside of a hooded tube (“the pulpit”). This species has both male and female plants, and the gender of an individual can change between years!



Smooth Solomon's Seal (*Polygonatum biflorum*)

This arching plant with alternating leaves is found in moist to dry-mesic woods. Take a look at the underside of the stem to see its nodding clusters of tubular flowers. These flowers turn into round, dark blue-violet berries when ripe.



Solomon's Plume (*Maianthemum racemosum*)

Solomon's plume is commonly mistaken for smooth Solomon's seal. The two differ primarily in the location of their flowers. Solomon's plume produces a panicle of white flowers at the end of its stem, whereas Solomon's seal produces flower clusters that hang beneath the leaves.



Narrowleaf Wild Leek (*Allium burdickii*)

Although this species doesn't flower until the summer, it is one of the first wildflowers to send out leaves in the spring. Oftentimes, this species creates dense colonies via underground bulb production. The leaves are narrow and they have an intense onion-like flavor.