



Spring Jewels Near You

# Woodland Ephemerals

---

Connie Stirling-Engman IP5

Toastmasters Cayuga Club

Jan. 31, 2023



YOU can find them... and be ENCHANTED



# *Right here* in Mundy Wildflower Garden

Part of Cornell University Botanic Garden



Get out early – March & April - look closely  
for these fleeting jewels as they “Wake Up”



Hepatica



Dog-tooth violet



# Pendulous Bellwort & Delicate Foam Flower





# What are Ephemerals?

- Ephemeral means lasting for only a brief time, fleeting, transitory, short-lived
- Flowering plants that bloom for a short time each spring
- Understory forest dwellers
- Short window of suitable conditions for above ground growth between frozen ground in winter and full shade of summer canopy





# Where are they found?

- Woodland settings with a bare deciduous canopy in very early spring
- Humous-rich soil with rich decaying organic matter
- Areas undisturbed by human activity





# Here are just a few to get you started...

---



Bloodroot (*sanguinaria Canadensis*)



Liverwort (*hepatica*)



Trout Lily/Dogtooth Violet  
(*erythronium Americanum*)



# Double Bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*)

Opens in full sun & closes at night





# Besides being beautiful, what are they good for?



- Supporting early, plant-specific pollinators
- Maintaining a healthy woodland ecosystem
- Medical uses
- Increasing genetic diversity



# And some more...



White Trillium (*Trillium grandiflora*)



Virginia bluebell (*Mertensia virginica*)



Red Trillium (*Trillium erectum*)







# Uses of Bloodroot

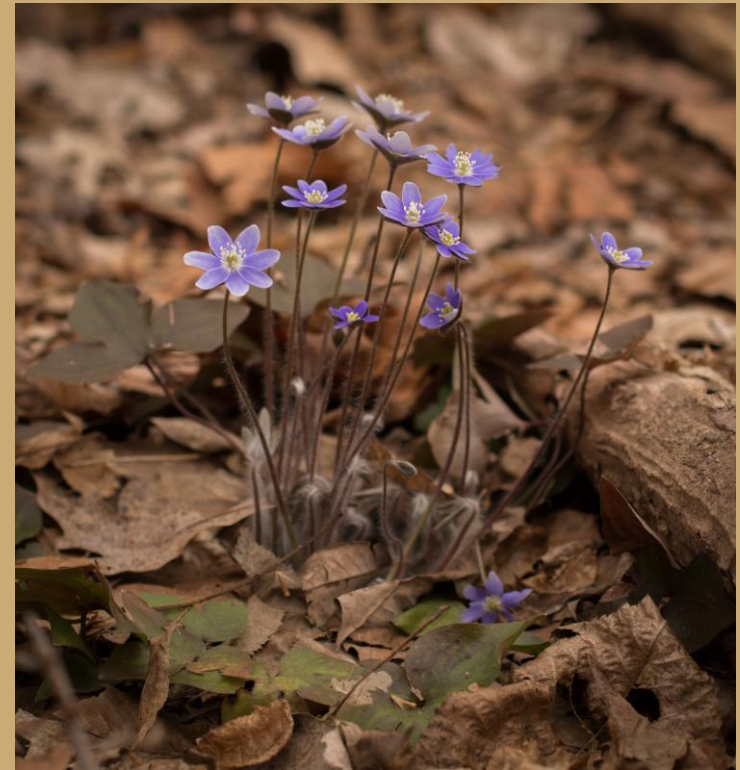


- Cancer treatment
- Antiplatelet treatment
- Inflammation, cough, infections
- Sanguinarine – compound that has antimicrobial activity & inhibits growth of new blood vessels
- Can be toxic





# Uses of Hepatica or Lungwort



- Astringent
- Diuretic
- Supports early pollinators



## Uses of Dogtooth Violet or Trout Lily



- Used by Cherokee & Haudenosaunee people for medicinal uses
- Contraception
- Food source for animals



# Benefits to Ecosystem & Soil

- First to bloom in spring, native ephemerals flowers provide a critical source of nectar and pollen for bumblebees, mining bees, various flies & gnats
- Improves the qualities of soil texture and physiochemical properties
- Improves genetic diversity
- DON'T PICK THEM, pollinators need them more than you do





# Winter Aconite (*eranthis hyemalis*)

native to Europe, naturalized elsewhere



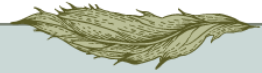
# Ephemerals fun facts

- Seeds contain eliasomes – fatty lipid rich compounds that early pollinators carry back to their young
- Some ephemerals attract a specialist pollinator. Ex: Trout lily, andrena erythronii
- Here today, gone tomorrow
- **DONT PICK THEM or STEP ON THEM!**





Often emerge in same place every year







# White Trillium

*Trillium grandiflora*





# Toothwort

*Dentaria diphylla*





# White Trillium with Toothwort







# Red Trillium

*Trillium erectum*



# Splendid variety to delight the eye



**Spring Beauty**

*Claytonia virginica*



**Snowdrop**

*Galanthus* – not strictly  
ephemeral



**Blue Cohosh**

*Caulophyllum thalictroides*  
From Algonquin word meaning “rough”



**Twin-leaf**

*Jeffersonia diphylla*





# Refresh with a Sublime Cycle of Nature

- These beauties appear for only a brief time
  - Fragile and deserve our protection
    - Support early pollinators
  - Integral part of woodland ecosystem







THE END