

SPRING EPHEMERALS

Spring is a special time for Michigan. In our forests, there are flowers that take advantage of these increasingly sunny, wet, and warm days before trees leaf out. Why do they grow in the spring, instead of waiting for the summer?

They spring forth from the soil, sometimes even from underneath snow, to soak up all the sunlight that the trees will monopolize in a couple short months.

These flowers, called spring ephemerals, quickly grow, and the matured ones will bloom for a few days to a few weeks. Once their short blooming time is over, you won't even be able to tell they existed! They let their above ground parts – the leaves, stems, and flowers – wither back into the soil. Only the underground parts remain, to send up new shoots next spring.

We hope you enjoy spotting these beauties on your walk through the Art Park.

A special thank you to Caitlin Chism for writing this guide!

Caitlin has a Bachelor's of Science in Natural History and Interpretation from SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry. She currently works with SEEDS, a nonprofit organization that specializes in after-school programs, youth conservation corps, and energy and environment analysis. She is particularly passionate about insects and native wildflowers!

Sources

<https://www.minnesotawildflowers.info/flower/>
<https://www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/>
<https://guilford.ces.ncsu.edu/2020/10/beechnodrops-a-native-parasitic-plant/>
<https://www.britannica.com/plant/squirrel-corn>

Answer Key

Yellow Trout Lily: It's called trout lily because the leaves' mottling resembles the body of a trout.

Large-Flowered Trillium: Their seeds have a nutrient rich coating that is irresistible to ants. The ants take the seeds back to their nest, eat the coating, and either leave them in their trash chamber, known as a midden, or bring the seeds back to the surface. This seed dispersal method is called myrmecochory!

Spring Beauty: One type of insect is native bees. As they buzz from flower to flower to collect pollen for food, they spread some of that pollen among the flowers they visit. They are pollinating them! Many other insects pollinate flowers as well, like certain beetles, butterflies, moths, ants, and even some wasps and flies.

Large-Flowered Bellwort: The leaves on large-flowered bellwort appear to grow around the stem instead of attaching to it at one spot. This is a good way to tell it apart from Solomon's Seal.

Dutchman's Breeches: Tucked away inside the flower is nectar and pollen, which are tasty treats for many insects. Instead of trying to muscle their way in between the petals, some insects take a shortcut by chewing through the petals!

Squirrel Corn: Their flowers are narrower, and its main flower stem is often straighter than the arched Dutchman's Breeches flower stem. Squirrel Corn flowers also tend to have a little bit of pink, while Dutchman's Breeches have a little bit of yellow.



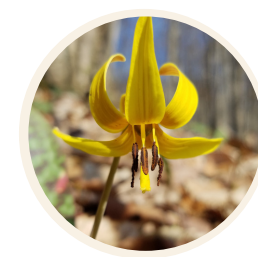
Michigan Legacy Art Park

For more information visit us at
12500 Crystal Mountain Drive
Thompsonville, MI 49683
www.michlegacyartpark.org
231-378-4963



SPRING WILDFLOWER GUIDE

*Welcome to Michigan Legacy Art Park!
Our 2-mile network of trails includes over 50 sculptures and a healthy and lush woodland environment. This guide will introduce you to some of the most common wildflowers in the Art Park.*



Yellow Trout Lily



Large Flowered Trillium



Large Flowered Bellwort



Spring Beauty

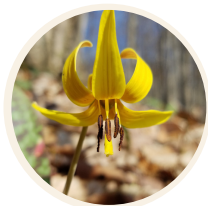


Dutchman's Breeches



Squirrel Corn

SPRING EPHEMERALS



Yellow Trout Lily
Erythronium americanum

Our hills are covered with this native lily in mid-April to early May. However, you'll discover that only a tiny fraction of the total plants will be flowering. This wildflower, like some other spring ephemerals, takes several years to grow before it will bloom.

Look for slightly shiny and waxy green leaves mottled with brown or purple. The flowers are a bright golden yellow and are made up of three petals and three sepals that look just like petals.

Why do you think it is called trout lily?

FOUND IT!



Large Flowered Trillium
Trillium grandiflorum

One of Michigan's showiest trillium species, the large-flowered trillium pops up sparsely within our park from mid-May to early June. All trilliums have three leaves, three petals, and three sepals (the sepals are the small green "leaves" directly behind the petals).

The large-flowered trillium is usually white, but the petals turn light pink as they age. Trilliums spend several years growing before they will bloom, so it's best to leave these protected flowers be. That way, everyone can see them year after year!

This wildflower has a special way of spreading its seeds. **Can you guess what it is?** Hint: It involves an insect.

FOUND IT!



Spring Beauty
Claytonia virginica

Spring beauty is small compared to the other spring wildflowers and can easily be missed hiding under leaf litter or even snow in April through May. In the park, it clusters by the lower trail near Robins!, along the ADA path by Discovery Grove, and by the

trail in between Five Needles and Inside a Historical Mystery: Mounds as you climb up the hill. The five-petaled flowers are pale pink or white, with streaks of pink.

What type of insect might be attracted to the brightly colored petals?

FOUND IT!



Large Flowered Bellwort
Uvularia grandiflora

When you see this flower, you may think it's wilted because the stem is bent, the leaves are limp, and the flower itself is drooping. Surprisingly, that's what large-flowered bellwort looks like in its flowering state, which happens in May.

Once it's done flowering, the plant straightens out and ends up looking like a non-flowering Solomon's seal. The flower is yellow, with 6 slightly twisted petals.

If the other wildflowers were too easy for you to spot, then you might enjoy trying to find this one. It's excellent at hiding! There are two known locations next to the trail for large-flowered bellwort. One is near the start of your journey, and the other is at the very back, not too far from the shortcut path before Dream of a Home.

Do you notice anything unusual about the leaves?

FOUND IT!



Dutchman's Breeches
Dicentra cucullaria

Dutchman's breeches is an interesting name for a wildflower, isn't it? They are so named because the flowers look a bit like upside-down pants. You can find it almost anywhere within our park in mid-April to early May.

This wildflower often lives alongside its close relative: the squirrel corn. Looking only at the feathery and fern-like leaves, they could be identical twins! Their flowers are what set them apart. Dutchman's Breeches flowers, as mentioned earlier, look like pants, while squirrel corn flowers look like hearts.

If you look closely at the flowers, you may see the petals dotted with tiny holes. **What do you think created them? And why?**

FOUND IT!



Squirrel Corn
Dicentra canadensis

Squirrel corn, unlike its cousin mentioned above, is not named after its flower. Instead, the name comes from the corn-like shape of the thicker parts of its roots. But like its cousin, you can find it throughout our park in mid to late April until early May.

Squirrel corn blooms about a week after Dutchman's breeches, but there's a brief period where you may see both flowers blooming together! Refer above to read how to tell Squirrel corn and Dutchman's Breeches apart.

Do you see any other ways to tell Squirrel corn and Dutchman's Breeches apart?

FOUND IT!