

A Selection of South Carolina Spring Wildflowers



Hepatica Anemone americana



Spring Beauty Claytonia virginica



Trout Lily Erythonium americanum



Little Sweet Betsy Trillium cuneatum



Oconee Bells Shortia galacifolia



Bloodroot Sanguinaria canadensis



Halberd-leaf Violet Viola hastata



Mayapple Podophyllum peltatum



Foam Flower Tiarella cordifolia



Star Chickweed Stellaria pubera



Cutleaf Toorthwort
Cardamine dissecta



Woodland Phlox Phlox divaricata



Jack in the pulpit Arisaema triphyllum



Yellow Lady Slipper Cypripedium parviflorum



Wild Ginger Hexastylis sp.



Atamasco Lily Zephyranthes atamascasca

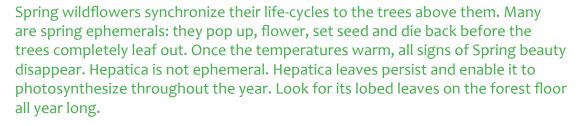


An Ecology of Spring Wildflowers: Adaptations and Connections

The forest floor begins to stir in early February as small green shoots push through the leaf litter. Spring begins! Spring wildflowers are stars in our wooded exhibits on the Natural Heritage Trail. The spring herbaceous layer is exceptionally diverse in environments with rich soils containing lots of organic material. Every day, from February to May. something new appears in the landscape!



Spring Beauty Claytonia virginica





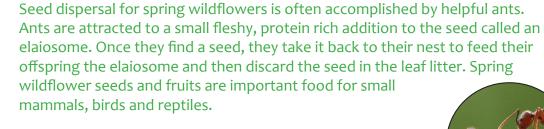
Round-lobed Hepatica Anemone americana

These plants adapt in other ways to cold temperatures and challenging environmental conditions. Their small stature offers them some protection from harsh weather. Bloodroot flowers are protected by a single enveloping leaf when they first emerge. If you look closely at hepatica, the stems and leaves are covered by tiny hairs that act as insulation. Deer are dissuaded from browsing Jack-in-the-Pulpit and Mayapple by the bitter chemicals each contains. Many of these plants only open their flowers when it's warm enough for their pollinators to be out. Bloodroot flowers open at 46° and their primary pollinators, bumblebees, fly at 41°. If pollinators don't visit, asexual reproduction comes to the fore. Plants are spread instead by stolons, rhizomes, or division of the underground structures.



Spring beauty bee Andrena erigeniae Photo: Judy Gallagher &cc by 2.0

Many of these spring flowers are an important nectar source for early emerging native bees and other insects. Some bees are generalists and visit multiple flower types. Other bees are more selective, relying on specific flowers: the spring beauty bee and trout lily mining bee are two examples. Butterflies, beetles, flies and other insects are also reliant on these flowers for nectar and pollen. The red-neck false blister beetle feasts on trout lily pollen (left).





Red-neck false blister beetle Asclera ruficollis Photo: Seth Ausubel Used with permission

When you visit your local woods, search out these diverse miniature beauties and check out who is visiting them!

Ant and seed with elaiosome Photo: Alex Wild, used with permission