

Spanning the Gap

Wandering Through Wildflowers

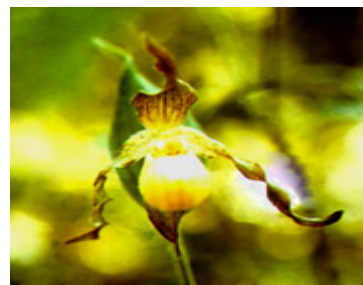


U.S. Dept. of the Interior
National Park Service

Spanning the Gap
The newsletter of
Delaware Water Gap National
Recreation Area
Vol. 6 No. 1 Spring 1983

By Chuck Robbins and Paula Jones
NPS sketches by Paula Jones

Spring is a time when you can have the pleasure of viewing the numerous wildflowers which inhabit Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area. To find these beautiful plants, you will need to leave your cars behind and go exploring along the many trails, streams and fields. Spring is the time for your senses to respond to the many sights, smells and sounds around you. Bring along your camera or sketch book to take home some of the beauty or simply relax and enjoy it all with a friend.



Yellow lady's slipper.



One of the first flowers you can see each spring is **skunk cabbage** (*symplocarpus foetidus*). Even before all the snow is melted, this plant begins to appear in wet marshy areas. In its early stages, skunk cabbage has a purplish *spathe* encircling a *spadix* of small flowers. Eventually the plant also grows very large and green cabbage-like leaves. When crushed, these leaves give off a pungent odor similar to that of a skunk.



A skunk cabbage spathe.
(This spathe fell off naturally -
- **DON'T** ever pick the
flowers!)



(Left) Skunk cabbage heaven -- lots of wet and mud PA.



A skunk cabbage spadix.

(Below, left) Early shoots of skunk cabbage. (Below, right) Leaves and spathe.



Skunk cabbage.



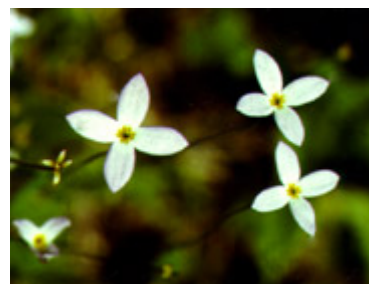
Jack-in-the-Pulpit (*arisaema atrorubens*), with its green and purple stripes, is another flower which you may find in wet areas. Its green-and-brown spathe, often striped, encircles a spadix with tiny flowers at its base.



Jack in the pulpit.



One of the most common spring wildflowers found in the recreation area is the **bluet** (*houstonia caerulea*), a tiny blue flower which normally grows in clumps. Around the recreation area they are often an extremely pale blue or even white.





(Left) Bluets in profusion on Mt. Minsi PA.

(Above) and (below) Bluets.



Indian Pipe

One of the least common flowers is **Indian pipe** (*monotropa uniflora*). This plant lacks chlorophyll, feeding instead on roots or decaying materials in the soil. The entire plant is white, rather than green, with leaves that are little more than scales along the stem.

The The nodding flower at the top may be pinkish, and later turn blackish.



Indian Pipe. (Photo courtesy of Kathleen Sandt.)



(Left) Indian Pipe at Blue Mountain Lakes NJ.



Indian Pipe in Bushkill PA.



Trout Lily

Two early spring wildflowers usually found near streams are trout lily and bloodroot.

Trout lily (*erythronium americanum*), a yellow flower also called **adder's tongue**, is the smallest member of the lily family and only grows to be several inches tall.



Trout lily. (NPS photo by Don F. Mitchinson))



Bloodroot (*sanguinaria canadensis*), once used for medicinal purposes, has a small white flower and is easy to identify due to the unusual shape of its leaf. The single leaf clasps the stem, as shown in the plant at left, which bloomed near park

headquarters.



Bloodroot.



(Left)
Bloodroot along
River Road PA.



A beautiful but rare wildflower is the **lady's slipper**, also called **moccasin flower** or **stemless lady slipper** (*cyripedium acaule*).

A member of the orchid family, it often grows on the floors of evergreen forests (*right*), and is distinguished from the **yellow lady's slipper**, *cyripedium calceolus* (*top of page*).

(Right) Pink lady's slipper in Bushkill PA.
(NPS photo by Maria Berde)





The red and yellow drooping bells of the **columbine** (*aquilegia canadensis*) are usually found upon rocky hillsides.



(Left)
A patch of columbine.



Columbine.



The flower called **Dutchman's breeches** (*dicentra cucullaria*), white in color, is another distinctively-shaped wildflower. Each flower appears to be a pair of pants hanging upside down.



Dutchman's breeches in Bushkill PA.



While wandering through the woodlands, also be aware of the many different kinds of *ferns* surrounding you. As ferns first begin to grow, they are called **fiddleheads**, a name easily understood by looking at the curled shape of the new growth.



Fiddlehead.



(Left)
Fiddleheads on
Mt. Minsi PA.



Fiddleheads.

These are just some of the many spring plants found in the recreation area. Please keep in mind that all these beautiful flowers are here for everyone's enjoyment. Like all the natural resources in the Park, these wildflowers are protected by law and must not be picked! To learn more about identifying beautiful wildflowers such as these, you may want to pick up field guides at the park's visitor centers.

Please remember that all wildflowers within Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area are protected by federal law and may not be picked or dug up for transplanting.