

# Guide to Spring Wildflowers on the Towpath

## Wildflowers seen and photographed on the C&O Canal Towpath Douglas Memorial Hike - April 19th to May 2nd, 2009

These photographs are arranged by date, as the hikers (the photographers) started in Cumberland, MD and headed to Georgetown in DC. Each photographer has supplied the date and approximate location of the photo (milepost) and sometimes a brief comment. Their initials are included: CC is Chris Cerniglia, JH is Jim Heins, PH is Pat Hopson, GL is Gage Linden, MR is Marj Richman, MOR is Marion Robertson, BS is Barbara Sheridan, RS is Rachel Stewart, JW is John Wheeler, BW is Betsy Williamson and FW is Frank Wodarczyk. There are two indices at the end where you can look up flowers by either their common or Latin name and find the page number where they will be pictured. (Thanks to Pat Hopson).

### **April 19, 2009 - Cumberland to Spring Gap (mile 184.5 to 173.4)**

Bloodroot, *Sanguinaria canadensis*. Although bloodroot usually blooms in late March in our area, we were fortunate to see one in bloom on our first day, somewhere between milepost 184 and 180. Spring Beauty is in the background. MR



Periwinkle, *Vinca minor*. (non-native escapee from domestic gardens). Near milepost 178. PH



Gill-over-the-ground, *Glechoma hederacea*. Very common tiny flower. Taken between milepost 175 and 173. JH.



Trout Lily or Dogtooth Violet, *Erythronium americanum*. Note the splotchy appearance of the leaves. Taken near milepost 175. MOR

Close-up of the Trout Lily - in this case also called Yellow Adder's Tongue. There is a white version, too. Near milepost 175. JH





Cut-leaved Toothwort or  
Pepperroot, *Dentaria  
laciniata*. Also found  
near milepost 175. JH



**April 20, 2009 - Spring Gap to Town Creek (mile 173.4 to 162.1)**

It was a rainy and cold day-so no flower pictures!

**April 21, 2009 - Town Creek to Stickpile (mile 162.1 to 149.4)**

Common Mullein, *Verbascum thapsus*. This  
is the first year rosette. It is a biennial.  
Near milepost 161. CC



Coltsfoot, *Tussilago farfara*. Taken  
at Paw Paw tunnel at the  
Cumberland end. This is one of the  
only spots you will find this flower.  
Milepost 155.8. BW

Bluebells, *Mertensia virginica*. Taken as the sun went down at Stickpile.  
Milepost 149.4 JH



**April 22, 2009 - Stickpile to Cacapon Junction (mile 149.4 to 133.6)**

Birdfoot Violet, *Viola pedata*. This is the bicolored variety. I confess that I found a whole bank of them off the Towpath near Bond's Landing (Milepost 150.2) when I was driving "Muffins". MOR







Sessile Trillium or Toadshade, *Trillium sessile*.  
Often found in a bunch like this - near milepost  
147. JH



Wild Columbine, *Aquilegia canadensis*. Milepost 146.5.  
JH

Jefferson Twinleaf, *Jeffersonia diphylla*. Taken near milepost 145. Don't  
know if it has bloomed already or if it will do so soon. JH



Common Dandelion, *Taraxacum officinale*. Of course, we saw these everywhere, this one near milepost 142. MOR



Dutchman's Breeches, *Dicentra cucullaria*. Near milepost 141. Bleeding heart family. They thrive on the river bank! FW



Squirrelcorn, *Dicentra canadensis*. Another *Dicentra*. Also found near milepost 141. Note the similarity to Dutchman's breeches! FW



**April 23, 2009 - Cacapon Junction to Hancock (mile 133.6 to 124.1)**

Bluebell, *Mertensia virginica*. On the banks of the Potomac River lining the Towpath. Sometimes there are white ones, but mostly they are BLUE! Near Milepost 132. MOR



Spring Beauty, *Claytonia virginica* These wonderful flowers are all along the Towpath but these were close to milepost 129. MOR



Blue Phlox, *Phlox divaricata*. Near milepost 127. Not to be confused with the Dame's rocket. This has five petals. FW



Redbud, *Cercis canadensis*  
Small tree just coming into bloom. Milepost 126. JW

**April 24, 2009 - Hancock to McCoy's Ferry (mile 124.1 to 110.4)**

Blue Violet, I'll guess at Common Blue (*Viola papilionacea*) or Early Blue (*Viola palmata*). It was taken near milepost 118. MR







Yellow violet, Also milepost 118. There are many violets and it is hard to identify this one without being there. My guess is the Smooth Yellow Violet, *Viola pennsylvanica*, but it could be the Downy Yellow (*Viola pubescens*). MR

Sessile Trillium or Toadshade, *Trillium sessile*. "Maroon flowers, the petals erect and not spreading outward. Leaves generally mottled." Milepost 118 MR



Skunk Cabbage, *Symplocarpus foetidus*. This large stand is near milepost 111. JW

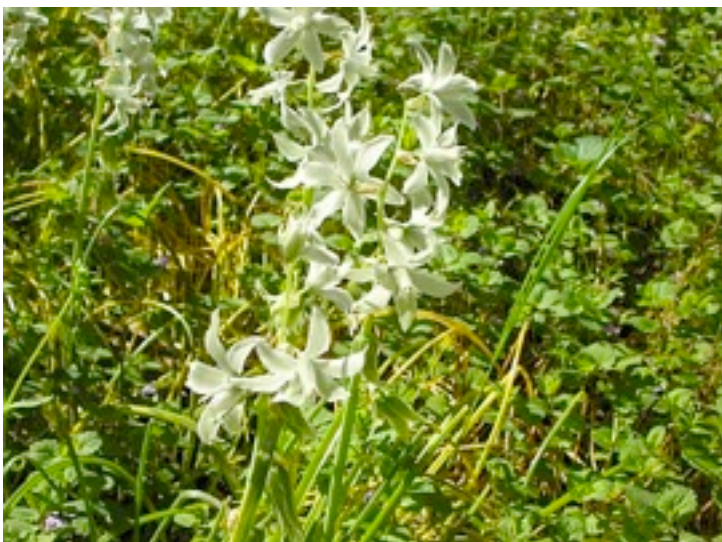


**April 25, 2009 - McCoy's Ferry to Williamsport (mile 110.4 to 99.7)**

Wild Ginger, *Asarum canadense*. Found just below Dam 5, about milepost 106. The flower of this plant usually hides along the ground, but the downy, heart-shaped leaf is easy to spot.



Canada Violet, *Viola canadensis*. Below Dam 5, about milepost 106. PH



Nodding Star-of-Bethlehem,  
*Ornithogalum nutans* (non native,  
but very pretty). Near milepost 106.  
RS





Bluebells! Everywhere! Hiker resting near milepost 105. FW

Garlic Mustard, *Alliaria officinalis*. (non native) This invasive plant is found everywhere. Probably introduced to the US in early 1800's by European settlers as a food. It inhibits the growth of many native plants and threatens several butterfly species because, while butterflies may lay their eggs on it, the larvae fail to survive due to the chemistry of the leaves. This photo at milepost 102. JW



**April 26, 2009 - Williamsport to Dam 4 (mile 99.7 to 84.4)**

Star Chickweed, *Stellaria pubera*. This one photographed just south of Williamsport after we got past all the garlic mustard. Near milepost 99. MOR







Red Trillium or  
Wakerobin, *Trillium  
erectum*. Taken  
near milepost 99.  
BS

The Virginia bluebells were one of the glories of this hike. For about seven days we saw huge fields of them. Here hikers walk through a “bluebell alley” lining the Towpath on both sides near milepost 97.PH





Speedwell, *Veronica scutellata*. Guessing that it is Marsh Speedwell because of the long, slender leaves. Near milepost 92. RS



Dwarf Larkspur, *Delphinium tricornes*. Near milepost 90. JH

Dame's Rocket, *Hesperis matronalis*. (non native escapee from domestic gardens). Not to be confused with wild phlox. Four petals for this one. Near milepost 89. GL





Wild Columbine, *Aquilegia canadensis*. About milepost 88.6. This flower is uncommon along the Towpath, but this patch can usually be found among the cliffs, about half a mile upstream from McMahon's Mill. PH



**April 27, 2009 - Dam 4 to Antietam campground (mile 84.4 to 69.4)**

Another Red Trillium! *Trillium Erectum*. Found below Snyders Landing which is Milepost 76.8. RS





**April 28, 2009 - Antietam to Brunswick campground (mile 69.4 to 54.0)**

Garlic Mustard near milepost 69. This shows how invasive it is. JH



Daisy Fleabane,  
*Erigeron annuus*. Taken  
near milepost 59. FW





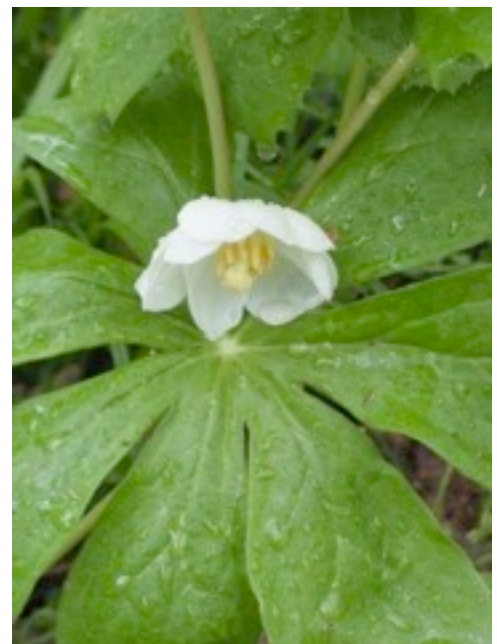
Dogwood, *Cornus florida*. Near milepost 59. This familiar small tree grows wild along the towpath. FW

**April 29, 2009 - Brunswick to Indian Flats (mile 54.0 to 42.4)**

Celandine Poppy or Wood Poppy, *Stylophorum diphyllum*. I have this in my shade garden at home. Taken south of the Catoctin Aqueduct at milepost 51. MOR



Mayapple, *Podophyllum peltatum*. Near milepost 50 below Lander. This flower forms luxuriant stands in late April and early May. PH





Common Paw Paw, *Asimina triloba*. Paw Paw is actually a scraggly bush/tree with these lovely flowers in the spring. It is the host plant for the Zebra swallowtail butterfly. Both are found along the Towpath! The picture on the left was taken not too far from Point of Rocks. Milepost 48.2 MOR  
The one on the right was near Milepost 48. RS



**April 30, 2009 - Indian Flats to Sycamore Landing (mile 42.4 to 27.2)**

White Phlox - Downy Phlox, *Phlox pilosa*. Front and side view. Near mile 42.4. MR



Paw Paw, *Asimina triloba*. Near milepost 34. Another of the wonderful shots by FW



Grape Hyacinth, *Muscari botryoides*. (non-native) Near milepost 33. FW

Redbud, *Cercis canadensis*. A closer look at the tree in full bloom. Pea family. Milepost 31. FW





**May 1, 2009 - Sycamore Landing to Great Falls (mile 27.2 to 14.3)**

Dandelion, Don't blow! Milepost 22. FW



Japanese Honeysuckle, *Lonicera japonica* (Non native). Native to east Asia, brought to the US through nursery trade, for wildlife habitat and erosion control. It overgrows small trees and shrubs, eventually killing them. Near milepost 22. FW

Field Chickweed, *Cerastium arvense*. Near milepost 21 below Violettes Lock. PH



Jack-in-the-pulpit, *Arisaema triphyllum*. Another wild flower that likes to hide - caught preaching at about milepost 20. MOR



**May 2, 2009 - Great Falls to Tidelock (mile 14.3 to 0.0)**

Spiderwort, *Tradescantia virginiana*. Near Great Falls overlook, milepost 14. This flower is uncommon along the Towpath, but this one was very evident. PH





Bluets, *Houstonia caerulea*. Milepost 11.  
These inconspicuous small flowers are  
a delight. PH



Bulbous Buttercup,  
*Ranunculus bulbosus*. This  
lovely little flower was found  
all along the lower towpath.  
Photo near milepost 6. MOR

Virginia Waterleaf,  
*Hydrophyllum virginianum*. This  
flower has a “watermark” on the  
leaf. Taken very close to  
Tidelock - maybe mile 3. MOR



This is the Princess Tree, *Paulownia tomentosa*. Not exactly a wildflower! But it frames the entry to Georgetown as we approach Tidelock and the end of a glorious spring hike! JW



This document was put together by a subgroup of the C&OCA Nature Committee. Members were Pat Hopson, Marjorie Richman, Marion Robertson, John Wheeler and Frank Wodarczyk. They were all hikers on the 2009 Douglas Memorial Hike.

Marion Robertson  
Co-chair, Nature Committee  
March 2010



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## **Reference books**

*Field Guide to Wildflowers of the Northeastern/North-central North America* by Roger Tory Peterson and Margaret McKenny. Copyright renewed 1996 by Virginia Marie Peterson. Houghton Mifflin Company, publisher.

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