

NATIVE WILDFLOWERS, GRASSES, AND FERNS FOR SHADED AREAS IN SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN

Native woodland plants, which most of these are, need soil rich in leaf litter, which provides nutrients and insulates them from drought and extremes of temperature. Heights are approximate, and based on my own observation and various nursery catalogs. Plants needing a lot of moisture are marked with an asterisk (*). Few of the plants listed grow in really deep shade.

SPRING “EPHEMERALS” (Very short). These woodland plants bloom early, before trees leaf out fully, and then tend to “die down,” some disappearing faster and more completely than others. Even if plants remain above ground, they don’t cover the ground very thickly. Consequently, do group together and carefully mark, and combine with somewhat larger—but not aggressive—plants with substantial leaves that persist throughout the growing season.

Claytonia virginica (Spring beauty)

Dentaria diphylla (Two-leaved toothwort)

Dentaria laciniata (Cut-leaved toothwort)

Dicentra canadensis (Squirrel corn)

Dicentra cucullaria (Dutchman’s breeches)

Erythronium americanum (Trout lily, Adder’s tongue, Dogtooth violet)

Hepatica acutiloba (Sharp-lobed hepatica)—Leaves appear after flowering.

Hepatica americana (Round-lobed hepatica)—Leaves appear after flowering.

Isopyrum biternatum (False rue anemone)

Mertensia virginica (Virginia bluebells)

Trillium grandiflorum (Large-flowered trillium)

OTHER SHORT PLANTS (2 ft. or under). Most plants in this section bloom in combination with and at roughly the same time (April and May) as the more “ephemeral” plants listed above.

Actaea rubra (Red baneberry)

Adiantum pedatum (Maidenhair fern)

Anemone canadensis (Canada anemone)—a vigorous ground cover.

Arisaema triphyllum (Jack-in-the-pulpit)

Asarum canadense (Wild ginger)—short and “flat”; possible ground cover.

Aster macrophyllus (Big-leaved aster)

Athyrium filix-femina (Lady fern)

*Caltha palustris (Marsh marigold)—needs to stay wet.

Carex pensylvanica (Pennsylvania sedge)

Euonymus obovata (Running strawberry, Hearts a-busting)—shrub, ground-cover.

Geranium maculatum (Wild geranium)—a beautiful plant that seeds itself generously.

Jeffersonia diphylla (Twinleaf)

Maianthemum canadense (Canada mayflower)—very short, possible ground-cover.

Phlox divaricata (Wild blue phlox)

Podophyllum peltatum (Mayapple)—vigorous ground cover.

Polemonium reptans (Jacob’s ladder)

Polygonatum biflorum (Solomon’s seal)

Polystichum acrostichoides (Christmas fern)--evergreen

Rue anemone (*Anemonella thalictroides*)

Sanguinaria canadensis (Bloodroot)—Leaves unfurl after flowering and increase in size.

Smilacina racemosa (False Solomon’s seal)

Smilacina stellata (Starry Solomon’s seal)

Uvularia grandiflora (Large-flowered bellwort)
Viola spp. (Violet species)

TALLER PLANTS (Often between 2 and 3 ft., but may be somewhat shorter or taller). Some of the plants in this section also bloom in spring.

Aquilegia canadensis (Wild columbine)
Arisaema triphyllum (Jack-in-the-pulpit)—apparently a taller form of this species.
Collinsonia canadensis (Richweed)—blooms summer.
Caulophyllum thalictroides (Blue cohosh)
Osmunda cinnamomea (Cinnamon fern)
Penstemon digitalis (Foxglove beard-tongue)—blooms early summer.
Polygonatum biflorum (Solomon's seal)—apparently a taller form of this species.
Stylophorum diphyllum (Wood poppy)
Thalictrum dioicum (Early meadow rue)
Triosteum aurantiacum (Horse gentian)—blooms summer.

MODERATELY TALL PLANTS (3 to 5 ft.). These plants bloom in summer or later.

Actaea pachypoda (White baneberry)—may also be shorter.
Asclepias exaltata (Poke milkweed)
Aster cordifolius (Heart-leaved aster)
Aster sagittifolius (Arrow-leaved aster)
Aralia racemosa (Spikenard)
Campanula americana (Tall bellflower)--biennial
Eupatorium rugosum (White snakeroot)—poisonous. Blooms very late.
Helianthus divaricatus (Woodland sunflower)
Hystrix patula (Bottlebrush grass)
*Lobelia cardinalis (Cardinal flower)—tolerates shade but still must be kept wet. Don't mulch.
Lobelia siphilitica (Great blue lobelia)—Needs less water than L. cardinalis.
Polymnia canadensis (Small-flowered leafcup)
Prenanthes alba (White lettuce, Lion's foot)
Scrophularia lanceolata (Early figwort)
Solidago caesia (Blue-stemmed goldenrod)
Solidago flexicaulis (Zig-zag goldenrod)

TALL PLANTS (Over 5 ft.)

Agastache nepetoides (Yellow giant hyssop)
Eupatorium purpureum (Sweet Joe Pye weed)
Thalictrum dasycarpum (Tall meadow rue)
Scrophularia marilandica (Late figwort)

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