

## ***Western North Carolina . . . Naturally***

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*Take only photographs, leave only footprints.*

This is a listing of the plants we saw and discussed on the High Peaks Trail Association outing at Ed Antosek's property, on the 27<sup>th</sup> of April 2013. You guys were a lot of fun, thanks for inviting me up your way, and for your enthusiasm!

**Trillium, Large flowered** - *Trillium grandiflorum*, a member of the **Lily** family (*Liliaceae*). As is the case with all Trillium species, this plant has three leaves, three sepals, three petals, and a three celled ovary. Petals are white when young and turn pinkish - purple as they age. This plant has been picked and eaten as a cooked green (the rootstock often dies if the leaves are removed), in addition to many medical applications. In Canada the root was chewed as an (ineffective) antidote to rattlesnake bites. Nearly all Trillium have a somewhat unpleasant aroma and were, regionally referred to as "wet dog Trillium". These bloom from April through June.

**Trillium, Nodding** - *Trillium cernuum*, is a member of the **Lily** family (*Liliaceae*). As is the case with all Trillium species, this plant has three leaves, three sepals, three petals, and a three celled ovary. This flower is distinctive in its habit of hanging downward below the whorl of three leaves. The flower is usually white with recurved petals, and the stamens are generally pink. Blooming time is from April into June.

**Trillium, Red (Wakerobin)** - *Trillium erectum*, a member of the **Lily** family (*Liliaceae*). As is the case with all Trillium species, this plant has three leaves, three sepals, three petals, and a three celled ovary. This species may have a red or white flower, and has been used to ease menopausal symptoms, and as an aphrodisiac. It is sometimes referred to as "Stink Robin" due to a somewhat unpleasant aroma. Typical of all Trillium it blooms from April through June.

**Trillium, Toadshade**- *Trillium spp.* These members of the **Lily** family (*Liliaceae*) have maroon *T. cuneatum* or yellowish (*T. luteum*) flowers which have no stalk. *T. luteum* is pleasantly scented. Another yellow flower one is *T. discolor* which is not noticeably scented. As is the case with all Trillium species, this plant has three leaves, three sepals, three petals, and a three celled ovary. These were, until relatively recently consider to be one species *T. sessile*. The species name *sessile* was derived from the lack of a stem on the flower. Blossoms are found from April through June.. We saw the Purple, and one *T. luteum*.

**Phacelia, Purple**- *Phacelia bipinnatifida* is a member of the **Waterleaf** family (*Hydrophyllaceae*). Sometimes called the **Fern-leaved Phacelia** has deeply divided leaves, blue flowers which are about ½ inch wide with stamens that extend well beyond the edge of the petals. April to June. *This was not quite in bloom.*

**Toothwort, Cut-leaved** – *Dentaria laciniata*. This member of the **Mustard** (*Brassicaceae*) family blooms from April to May. The deeply “cut” leaves distinguish it from its close relative *D. diphylla*, the **Two-leaved Toothwort**. Another variant, the Slender Toothwort, *Denataria heterophylla*, can be distinguished from the other two by the stem leaves which are distinctly different from the basal leaves. The common name refers to the toothlike projections on the rhizome. The rhizome has a distinctly peppery taste and was chewed by American Indians for toothaches, and as a treatment for colds. These bloom from April until, at higher elevations, June. Some recent taxonomic studies put these in the genus *Cardamine*. *We saw the Two-leaved.*

**Dog Hobble**, *Leucothoe editorum* is a member of the **Heath** family (*Ericaceae*). A relative of Rhododendron, Azaleas, and Sourwoods this low growing shrubby plant got its common name because, as the old-timers said, if left unchecked it would grow so thick it would hobble a dog, should one try to walk through a thicket of it. The unremarkable, greenish white flowers grow in short clusters and are evident from April through May.

**Chickweeds** are members of the **Pink** family (*Caryophyllaceae*) and have opposite, entire leaves. Three species of chickweed are commonly found in our area: **Star chickweed**, *Stellaria pubera*; **Common chickweed/Starwort**, *S. media*; and **Mouse-eared Chickweed**, *Cerastium vulgatum*. . Star Chickweed is the showiest and the only one of the three native to the area. A favorite food of many birds the leaves of this genus have also been touted as a healthy substitute for spinach, with a high Vitamin C content and, many say, a more agreeable flavor. These are commonly found in bloom from March through May. *We saw the common.*

**Rhododendron, Rosebay/Great Laurel** - *Rhododendron maximum* is a member of the **Heath** family (*Ericaceae*). Lower growing than its cousin, the Catawba Rhododendron, this species has pink flowers often spotted with green or orange. The leaves are often pointed at both the base and tip. Large populations of these growing along with Mountain Laurel, and Flame Azaleas were so impassible that they were commonly referred to as “Laurel Hells”. Poulticed leaves were used by Indians as an analgesic for pain associated with arthritis. This is highly toxic and ingestion can lead to convulsions and coma. This species blooms in June and July. *Not in flower for our walk.*

**May Apple /American Mandrake** - *Podophyllum peltatum*, a member of the **Barberry** family these have a solitary, nodding, nine petaled flower which grows out from between two large (up to 12 inches across), deeply lobed leaves. Immature plants feature only one leaf, and do not produce flowers. The leaves emerge from the ground tightly wrapped around the stem and unfurl as the plant matures. When the seed pod matures, its weight causes the stem to droop which puts the seed pod near the ground. Box turtles prize this delicacy, and via their droppings are the prime distributor of the plant. Many herbal guides declare the fruit to be edible, despite a pronounced laxative effect, when ripened to a golden color. (*DON'T TRY THIS AT HOME!!*) The flowers bloom from April into June.

**Foam Flower** - *Tiarella cordifolia*. This attractive member of the **Saxifrage** (*Saxifragaceae*) family spreads via underground stems, forming colonies and making an excellent ground cover for shady sites. The genus name is from the Greek *tiara*, a turban worn by the Persians, and refers to the shape of the pistil. The high tannin content may explain the use by American Indians of a leaf tea as a mouthwash, and eye rinse. The root was used as a diuretic, to treat constipation, and as a poultice for open wounds. Blooms from April until May.

**False Solomon' Seal** - *Smilacina racemosa*, a member of the **Lily** family (*Liliaceae*), this plant can be distinguished from Solomon's Seal by the flowers and berries which form only on the end of the stalk. The leaves are alternate along the stem which is somewhat zig-zag between the leaf nodes. Young shoots can be prepared and served like Asparagus. The rootstock is edible but must be soaked overnight in a lye solution and then parboiled. Blooming occurs from May to July.

**Spring Beauty** - *Claytonia virginica* is a member of the **Purslane** (*Portulacaceae*) family. This plant grows from a potato like tuber which has a chestnut like flavor. Colonists and Indians alike used them for food. *C. caroliniana*, the **Carolina Spring Beauty**, has broader oval to oblong leaves. The flower petals are white to pinkish, with darker pink veination. Whole hillsides are frequently covered so densely with these that it looks almost like snow. March through May is the normal flowering period.  
*We saw the virginica.*

**Bellwort** - *Uvularia sessilifolia*, *U. perfoliata*, and *U. grandiflora*. Members of the **Lily** family (*Liliaceae*) these plants have opposite, entire leaves. *U. sessilifolia*, **Wild oats**, has one or two drooping, yellowish, bell shaped flowers atop an angled stem whose leaves lack stalks. *U. perfoliata*, **Perfoliate bellwort**, has perfoliate leaves (they appear to be pierced by the stem) and the throat of the flower is generously coated with orange granules. *U. grandiflora*, **Large -Flowered bellwort**, has the largest flowers (bright yellow) of the three, and perfoliate leaves which are downy underneath. Young shoots may be stripped of leaves and boiled for at least ten minutes, then eaten like asparagus. The roots of these plants were thought to be a treatment for throat diseases since the drooping flower was said to resemble the Uvula in the human throat (Doctrine of Signatures). A poultice of the root was used for toothaches. One or more of these may be found in bloom from April through June. *We saw the large flowered and the wild oats.*

**Little Brown Jugs**- *Hexastylus spp.* are members of the **Birthwort** family (*Aristolochiaceae*). The flowers, like those of Wild Ginger, grow from the base of the leaf stalk. While not showy, the jug like shape of the flowers makes this an interesting plant. There are 8 species of this genus in North Carolina (seven of which are found in the mountains) which are difficult to distinguish from one another. These are sometimes called Heartleaf and/or Wild Ginger.

**Anemone, Wood** – *Anemone quinquefolia* is a member of the **Buttercup** family (*Ranunculaceae*.) This species has no petals, but 5 regular white sepals which look to be

petals. The foliage is deeply cut, often into 3 – 5 leaflets. Common in the north, in the south these are found only in the mountains. They bloom from April into June.

**Wood Lily, Speckled** – *Clintonia umbellulata* has basal leaves which are shiny, bright green and oblong. The stalk is topped by 3 – 6 white flowers which are speckled with bluish spots. These bloom from May into June. The flower stalk was up, but these were not quite in flower.

**Hepatica spp.- Round-lobed Hepatica, *Hepatica americana*, and Sharp lobed Hepatica, *H. acutiloba*,** are members of the **Buttercup** family (*Ranunculaceae*). The genus name was derived from the fact that the 3 lobed leaves supposedly resemble the liver. The Cherokees thought that dreaming of snakes was a horrible omen and made a tea of Hepatica and Walking Fern. This concoction led to violent vomiting, but reputedly prevented dreaming of snakes. One of the region's earliest bloomers, this sure sign of spring is in flower from March to May. At the elevation of the garden, these were past bloom.

**Trout Lily/Adder's Tongue- *Erythronium americanum*** is one of our earliest blooming members of the **Lily** family (*Liliaceae*). Easily identified by the mottled basal leaves (from which the common name arose), this plant also produces a beautiful yellow flower whose petals are reflexed and close at night. American Indians used a root tea for fevers, and Iroquois women ate the raw leaves to prevent conception. Blooming from March until May, this species is a sure indicator of spring's imminent arrival. These were past bloom.

**Turk's Cap Lily – *Lilium superbum*** – The largest (up to 8 feet tall) and showiest (in my opinion) of our native Lilies, the Turk's Cap has been known to have up to 40 blossoms on one plant! The recurved petals and sepals led to the common name - I'm guessing that some Turks must have worn a really striking hat. Looking into the downward facing, spotted blossom reveals a green star formed in the throat. NA Indians used the bulb for soup. Jul – Aug. These were not in bloom.

**Pepperbush, Sweet – *Clethra alnifolia*** is a member of the **White Alder** family (*Clethraceae*). Growing as a small shrub, frequently multi-stemmed this species features racemes of aromatic white flowers approximately 1/3 inch long with protruding styles. The leaves are egg shaped and sharply toothed. These bloom from July into September.

**Phlox, Wild Blue - *Phlox divaricata*,** a member of the **Phlox** (*Polemoniaceae*) family. Like all Phlox, this species has 5 petals fused into a slender tube which opens abruptly into a wider more “petal like” form. These are found in bloom from April until June.

**Violet, Canada- *Viola canadensis*,** this member of the **Violet** family (*Violaceae*) has a white flower the base of which has a yellowish tinge, while the back has a purplish tinge. This is a northern species and in our region is found only in the mountains. Root tea was used by Native Americans to ease bladder pain, while the roots and leaves were chewed to induce vomiting. Blooms are found from April through July.

**Violet, Sweet White** – *Viola blanda*, is a member of the **Violet** family (*Violaceae*) with very small, heart shaped, lobed leaves and small, fragrant white flowers. These bloom in April – May.

**Violet, Smooth Yellow** - *Viola pennsylvanica*, is a member of the **Violet** family (*Violaceae*) which is similar in appearance to the downy yellow violet with stem leaves approximately as wide as long and prominent veination. The primary difference is that the smooth yellow violet has leaves and stems that are nearly smooth, and there are usually 1 - 5 basal leaves. These bloom from April until June.

**Violet, Halberd Leaved** - *Viola hastata*. One of three yellow leaved violets in our area it can be distinguished by its lanceolate leaves, and the purplish tinge on the back of the petals. These bloom in April and May.

**Ragwort, Golden** - *Packera aureus* is a member of the **Aster** family (*Asteraceae*) and may be identified by their time of bloom, May through July, the small number of “ray” flowers (8- 12), and the finely dissected leaves on the stem. While there are many species in our region, this one usually has a heart shaped basal leaf which is quite long stemmed. The roots and leaves were used in a tea by Indians, settlers, and herbalists to treat a variety of lung ailments and dysentery. Various concoctions have also been used to help with complications in childbirth. Many species of Ragwort contain highly toxic compounds.

**Bishop’s Cap/Miterwort**- *Mitella diphylla* is a member of the **Saxifrage** family (*Saxifragaceae*). This species has beautifully fringed, white flowers (5 petals) in a long raceme. The plant may also be identified by the two, nearly stalkless (sessile) stem leaves growing just under the flowers. The common name refers to the shape of the fruit which resembles a small cap, or bishop’s miter. Particularly attractive when viewed with a hand lens these bloom in April and May.

**False Hellebore/Indian Poke**, *Veratum viride*, this member of the **Lily** family (*Liliaceae*) has large, green, yellow ribbed leaves which clasp the stem. Flowers are greenish, heart shaped and hairy. The flowers are in a large cluster at the top of the stem. The plant withers away before summer. Alkaloids in the plant have been shown to slow human heart rate, and reduce blood pressure. May through July is the best time to find the flowers in bloom.

**Anemone, Rue** - *Anemonella thalictroides* is a member of the **Buttercup** family (*Ranunculaceae*) having 2-3 fragile, stalked flowers above a whorl of 3 lobed, compound leaves. What appear to be 6 petals are actually sepals. Indians used a root tea for diarrhea and vomiting. These are found in bloom from March until May.

**Hornbeam, American/Ironwood/Blue beech** (*Carpinus caroliniana*) is a member of the Birch family (*Betulaceae*). These leaves are alternate along the branch, two ranked in a plane with the twig or branch, 2 - 4 inches long and double toothed. The trunk and larger branches are sinewy appearing, somewhat like taut muscles. This led to the common name of “Muscle Tree”. The bark is gray, tight, and smooth. The Hornbeam is derived

from “Horn” for toughness, and “beam” for tree. The wood is extremely strong, but the tree’s small size restricts its use primarily to tool handles. The “beech” name was misapplied probably due to the bark which is similar to the Beeches. Deer browse the twigs and foliage, while grouse and quail eat the nutlets. This species is commonly found in bottomlands and rich woods.

We also saw several ferns, in the fiddlehead stage of growth, a cultivar of Columbine, and Ajuga which is an introduced mint.