



Operated by the Franklin Outing Club

SPRING WILDFLOWER GUIDE



Wildflowers along the VMRA trails (primarily Shaw Pond Trail - SPT) and in the VMRA woods and fields! Flowers appear in this Guide in roughly chronological order of blooming, and/or in order as most likely found on Shaw Pond and other Trails.

This is an informal guide by VMRA volunteer, Franklin resident and amateur naturalist, Karen Darling. All photos were taken by Karen at the VMRA in 2023-25. Please direct questions, comments, additions or corrections to Karen: kp19_95@yahoo.com

PLEASE do NOT PICK, dig up or collect seeds of **ANY wildflowers!**

These are (mostly) native species; many take years to mature and bloom, and die or adapt poorly to domestic use.

ENJOY their beauty and diversity!
"Take only photos, leave only footprints."

Usually start blooming in late April-early May:

Mayflower



This sign of Spring, pink to white, can be found near the entrance to Shaw Pond Trail. The Massachusetts State Flower. Its scientific name *Epigaea repens* means "trailing on the Earth" which is how Mayflowers grow, their long stems clinging to the ground.

Trillium (Red and Painted)



"Reds" (8-15" tall) grow all along Shaw Pond Trail. "Painteds" (white with pink interior, 6-8" tall) are along the trail just **after** Shaw Pond, as the trail continues around the Pond's western shore. There are 44 species of Trillium, each with 3 petals and 3 leaves. "Reds" are usually done blooming by mid-May.

Sessile Bellwort

(AKA Wild Oats or Merrybells)



These tender herbs can be found all along the trails, their pale yellow, tubular flowers pointed downwards. "Sessile" refers to the leaves growing from the stem.

Threeleaf Goldthread



Tiny and delicate, these perennial herbs flower for a very short time, so are hard to find. Often growing near moss. Its common name "canker-root" comes from traditional medicinal use, including to treat canker sores.

Hobble-Bush



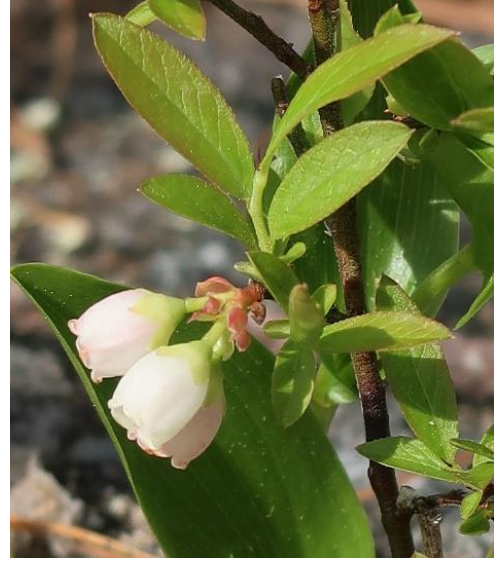
Colorful in every season, in Spring this shrub's white flower clusters brighten the forest. Especially found near running water. Gets its name from its rooting branches, which can trip (or hobble) hikers.

Downy Serviceberry



This flowering shrub/tree grows 15-40 feet tall. Can be found where Shaw Pond Trail reaches the Pond. Toxic to humans and pets.

Leatherleaf



Named for its tough leaves, this shrub has delicate, bell-shaped flowers. Found at Shaw Pond, Leatherleaf grows in sunny sites in acidic soil of northern bogs.

Pitcher Plant



By early May the flower stalks of Pitcher Plants in Shaw Pond start emerging, and grow to 2' tall by mid-May (photo on right). These insectivores attract prey to their lips, which then slide down the oily sides into a pool of digestive liquid. Pitcher plants grow about 20 feet from the southern shore. (Approach the water's edge below the flagpole; look for their reddish "pitchers".)

Usually start blooming in mid-May:

Fringed Polygala (AKA Gaywings)



It's a joy to see these 6" high, brilliant bursts of color! Can be found near the entrances of Shaw Pond and Taia's Trails, directly across Flaghole Road from each other.

Wood Violet



Blues and whites are the most common colors seen, found in shade along the trail. Closely related to common violets in one's lawn. Ants are attracted to their protein- and fat-rich seeds, thus helping to disperse them. Violets often provide shelter for small fritillary butterflies.

Star Flower



A small woodland perennial, found all along the trail. Usually 1 or 2 flowers, with 5 to 10 petals forming a star. Folklore says these flowers attract fairies and spirits.

Wild Sarsaparilla



Found along the trail, these 1-2' tall plants feature a crown of leaves a foot across; below this "umbrella" are the white flower clusters, which attract pollinators. Its name comes from having a flavor similar to that used in vintage sodas.

Canada Mayflower



This tiny plant covers the ground in many shady spots, as it is well-adapted to surviving harsh winters. Its sweet smell and appearance contribute to a common name, "False Lily-of-the-Valley" though it is related to neither that nor to regular Mayflowers. Both flower in May.

Blue-Eyed Grass



This hardy member of the Iris family thrives even after drought. Only 6-12" high, it stands distinctly upright. Usually found in sunny meadows such as on the open, "ski" side of the ski hill.

Pink Lady Slipper

There are many Pink Lady Slippers, the official State Flower of New Hampshire, a large, native, wild orchid, at the VMRA! They usually bloom mid- to late-May. A few are near the ski lodge, and several are at the Shaw Pond Trailhead kiosk. A half-dozen more, one or two at a time, grace both sides of the start of the trail. Later, as the trail approaches Shaw Pond, more Lady Slippers can be found. And a treasure-trove of two dozen, growing together on one small hillside, is at the very top of the ski hill; reached via Shaw Pond Trail, to the Elks Trail, to the Loop Trail and finally the Peak Trail.



False Solomon's Seal



Found especially in sunny spots, False Salomon Seal's scientific name *Maianthemum* means "blooms in May", when it shows off a spike of small white flowerets, attracting pollinators.

Indian Cucumber



These grow 2 or 3 "stories" tall, each with an umbrella of leaves under which are delicate flowers. Found all along the Shaw Pond Trail in shade. Their tubers taste like cucumbers. (Requires digging up, thus killing the plant - so please don't.)

Bunchberry Dogwood



Always symmetrical, these squat little blooms are numerous at both the Shaw Pond trailhead and as one approaches the pond itself. Named for its red berries in the Fall, and being in the Dogwood family. Ejects pollen grains (for cross-pollination), fastest of any plant.

Mapleleaf Viburnum



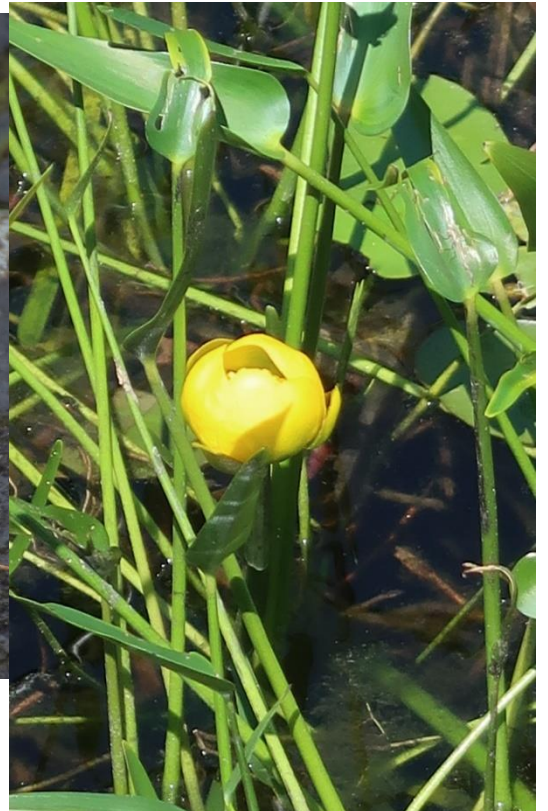
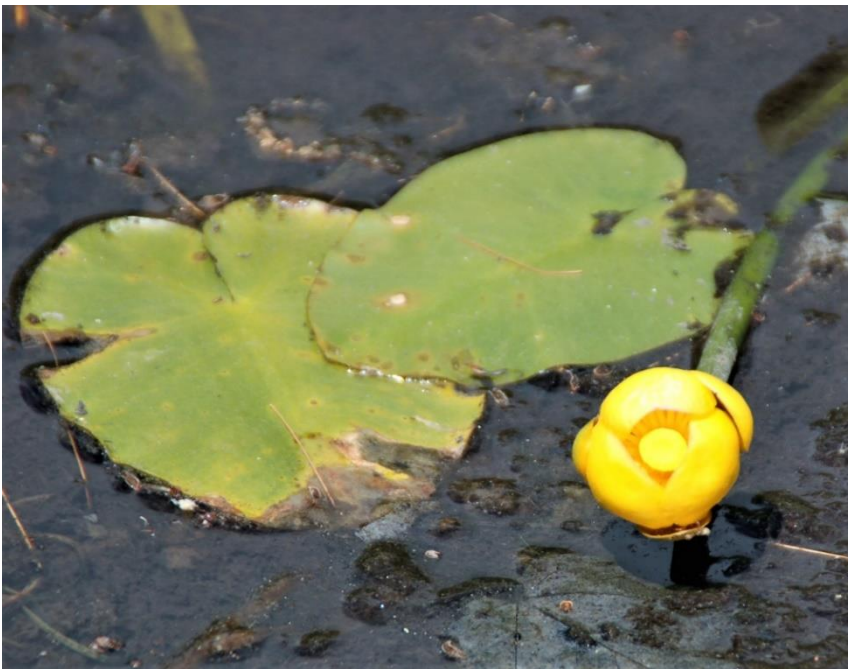
If not for its flowers, one would think it's a young maple tree! Adapted to shady spots; can be found before Shaw Pond Trail approaches the pond. Is a host plant for Spring Azure butterfly larvae.

Wayfaring Viburnum



Very versatile and adaptive, can be found in shade and sun. Creates its own microhabitat with its dense, layered foliage, providing shelter for beneficial insects, often found on its flower clusters.

Yellow Pond Lily



By mid-May you start to see Yellow Pond Lilies on Shaw Pond, which continue blooming through the summer. They grow in shallower ponds, especially beaver ponds and tolerate stagnant water. Roots are in the sediment, leaves and flowers on surface.

Usually start blooming in late May:

Sheep Laurel



Bumblebees are especially attracted to these, both by the intricate patterns and ultraviolet light (beyond human vision spectrum) reflected by the petals. Sheep Laurel can propel its pollen with precision onto visiting pollinators. Its other common names, Lambkill, Calf-kill and Sheep Poison attest to it being toxic if eaten.

Beech Drops



It's easy to overlook these as little dry sticks poking up in the leaf litter, but look closely and you'll see their tiny flowers, which range from yellow to pink to purple! Look for these on the Loop Trail, east of Shaw Pond.

Climbing False Buckwheat



Also known as Climbing Bindweed, this resilient "weed" survives in harsh conditions, quickly colonizing new areas and recovering from disturbances, and can thrive in a variety of soils. Look closely to see its tiny white flowers.

~MEADOW WILDFLOWERS~

On the next pages, we go from wildflowers along trails through the woods and to Shaw Pond, to plants which prefer a sunny, meadow habitat - the open, "ski" hill. Starting mid-May and through summer, this area will have more wildflowers, while the woods will have fewer.

To access the meadow wildflowers, one can either start at the top of the ski hill (via Loop Trail and then Peak Trail) and meander DOWN, or start at the bottom, taking the wide trail/access road at far right of the hill, and go UP. **Either way, avoid the low, flat area about 1/4 up the hill; that spot is full of poison ivy!** Above the first rocky outcrops it's usually safe to meander, and walk among the wildflowers!

Bluets



Bluets produce a large number of seeds, and close at night and in bad weather, both help them reproduce. They prefer well-drained soil and will bloom all summer.

Golden Alexanders



Very important to the Black Swallowtail Butterfly, with whom it has a symbiotic relationship - the larvae depend on the plant for food, and the adult butterflies enhance pollination. Golden Alexanders are in the same family as carrots and parsnips, whose flowers are similarly shaped, but are toxic to pets. Hearty resistance to diverse conditions; thrive in floodplains.

Meadow Hawkweed



Commonly thought of as a weed, Hawkweed is an important food source for the larvae of several moths, and its sturdy roots help stabilize soil. Blooms all summer.

Meadow Buttercup



Prefer damp soil, but sunny spots. Commonly considered weeds; all parts are toxic if eaten. However, it is the main diet of leaf beetle larvae. A saying goes: pick a buttercup and hold it under your chin -- if your chin shines yellow, you love butter!

Bird's-Foot Trefoil



Called "bee bread"; so loved by bees, who make fruity honey from its nectar! Is the only food for Clouded Yellow Butterfly larvae, and is a protein-rich forage for livestock. Nitrogen-fixing nodules on roots improve the soil. Seed pods burst when dry, dispersing seeds.

Plantain Pussytoes



In the Daisy family, resilient in disturbed soils, often one of the first, pioneering species in a habitat. Found along edges of the wide trail/access road leading up the side of the ski hill. Named "pussytoes" because the flowers evoke soft little cats' feet.

Field Pussytoes



An important early season nectar source for pollinators. Also thrives in poor soil. Asexual reproduction; offspring genetically identical.



Bird (or Cow) Vetch



As with all legumes (Pea and Bean family) its roots use bacteria in the soil to convert nitrogen from the air to usable nitrates; uses its tendrils to climb and cling. An important source of nectar for bees, and can make blue dye. Horses love to eat vetch!

Siberian Iris (Blue and White)



Siberian (AKA "Flag") Iris excels at surviving in harsh climates, such as New England winters. It is an "indicator" species, highlighting the state of a healthy ecosystem. These Irises can self-fertilize, which means they can reproduce even without pollinators, although they do provide insects with nectar. Siberian Irises sprout up and bloom during the damp season of late Spring/early Summer. At VMRA, both purple and white Irises can delight the eyes across the entire upper half of the sun-exposed ski hill.

Yarrow



Blooming all summer, its flowers attract many pollinators! Used as an anesthetic by Native Americans and in skin creams. Found in meadows and along pathways; feathery leaves help survive dry conditions; reduce water loss.

White Clover



Although seemingly minor, white clover is considered a "coin of green gold" in ecological value! Its blossoms brim with nectar, attracting bees. Clover is a protein-rich feed for livestock, and its roots attract nitrogen-fixing bacteria, enriching the soil for itself and other plants.