

# The Trillium

Piedmont Chapter  
North American Rock Garden Society  
Chapel Hill, Durham, Raleigh, NC

## Wildflowers Go Wild

By Betsy Pringle

The very wildness of wildflowers is always a thrill. The great diversity of species gathered together in some places or, the huge colonies of a particular beauty in another, awakens in us a special wonder at the marvels of nature. Somehow we were in just the right place when the flowers were at their peak on a gorgeous day.

Wildflowers have been part of my life from my earliest memories of my first garden plot in my mother's garden. From then on my gardening has been largely, though not exclusively, about wildflowers. It is continually fascinating to try to recreate in a garden some of what happens with wildflowers in the natural landscape, which is of course that when they are happy they go wild.

It is a joy to sift through mental pictures of encounters in nature where wildflowers have thrived beyond anything we could have imagined. I'm sure we all have had some stunning experiences we can never forget. Among my most amazing was coming upon acres of *Phaecelia fimbriata* (on the Boulevard Trail going up Mt LeConte in Tennessee; another was the hundreds of *Trillium grandiflora* beside the trail up Bluff Mountain. So many factors have to be just right for large colonies to form of a single species, and there are many reasons they could go into decline even in protected areas.

There is a place my husband and I hike to in the mountains almost every year in early May where hundreds of *Trillium vaseyi* have grown on a steep slope for who knows how long. The abundant deep maroon blooms almost 4" across with their bright yellow stamens winking at us from under their huge leaves as we approached from below greeted us each year. It is amazing to know and visit a colony like this year after year, but during the recent severe drought years we noticed changes that distressed us. Many fewer *Trillium* and



Photo by John Pringle

***Phaecelia fimbriata***

much more *Leucothoe fontanesiana* (Dog Hobble is a perfect common name for this plant) now entangled the slope. This past May we have seen a resurgence of sorts. We counted fifty *Trillium vaseyi* plants in our partial survey. The effects of the vagaries of nature can be devastating to a special colony like this and we hope the *Trillium vaseyi* is on its way back..

On this same slope, higher up, *Cypripedium pubescens* (Yellow Lady's Slipper) grows in a small colony, and even higher in a rock outcropping that forms a bowl creating a small wetland on the seepage slope is *Parnassia asarifolia* (Grass-of-Parnassus), which blooms at the end of summer.

There is a quote from Aldo Leopold who wrote *A Sand County Almanac* that I think about in connection with saving wildflowers: "It is fortunate, perhaps, that no matter how intently one studies the hundred little dramas of the woods and meadows, one can never learn all of the salient facts about any one of them."



Photo by John Pringle

***Trillium vaseyi***



This thought is important and humbling to the gardener as we try to manipulate and control even our own little piece of the natural world. Actually, it frees me to accept and welcome the spirit of wildness in the garden. Everything can't be trim and tidy and in its proper place in the wildflower garden. If we try to tame all these little beauties what will we have? We'll have examples of wildflowers in their separate places but will have failed even to mimic what goes on in nature.

When wildflowers are happy they spread, they move themselves around and they find new niches that we didn't even think of – often to this gardener's delight.

One of the earliest wildflowers of spring is *Sanguinaria canadensis* (Bloodroot). Each year it is a surprise to find the first emergence of the furled silvery grey-green leaf protecting the little white pearl of the bud as it peeps out of the ground. In no time the bud has extended and the flower has opened fully into its startling white show. I have had Bloodroot in my garden every place I have lived, but in my Tenney Farmhouse Garden in Chapel Hill, it has spread with an exuberance I could never have imagined. With lots of help from the ants, who carry its seeds to their nests and thus spread it around, it has popped up everywhere, even in my sunny front garden, making blankets of the startling white flowers. It is truly an astonishing early spring show.

The thick knobby rhizome of the Bloodroot is making a tight network underground that is taking over other special plants. The *Thalictrum thalictroides* is being overwhelmed. It breaks through the ground very early also and its tiny leaves are

red as they emerge and later produce the small lovely white flowers that to me are the very essence of the intimacy of being in the woods. *Trillium grandiflora* and *Trillium catesbaei* are also struggling with the crowded Bloodroot rhizomes and can hardly find their own space.

I never dreamed I would be weeding out swaths of Bloodroot, but it has come to that. No single wildflower can have my whole half acre garden no matter how special. There will always be plenty of *Sanguinaria canadensis* but just not as much.

It is amazing how many different plants can grow happily together in the same patch of dirt with something blooming at all seasons. In nature these things take care of themselves with either one species taking over or many co-existing.



Photo by John Pringle

***Sanguinaria canadensis***

In the sunny front garden of the Tenney Farmhouse Garden there are wildflowers and native shrubs intermingled with bulbs, iris, old roses and some non-native perennials and shrubs. Various combinations of plants are coming into bloom and fading or going dormant throughout the year. In May, among the native perennials in bloom, there would be *Oenothera fruiticosa* and *O. speciosa*, *Chrysogonum virginianum*, *Penstemon smallii*, *Aquilegia canadensis*, *Senecio aureus* and *Baptisia australis*.

I have no grass in my garden but there is always a certain amount of pulling up of some plants that have spread too far or deciding what to deadhead or to leave for the birds, and there is weeding which has its own contemplative pleasures. Someone has de-



Photo by John Pringle

***Oenothera fruiticosa* and *O. speciosa*, *Chrysogonum virginianum*, *Penstemon smallii*, *Aquilegia canadensis*, *Senecio aureus* and *Baptisia australis***



scribed this aspect of gardening as editing but somehow that sounds a little too bookish for me. At any rate this all beats mowing, blowing and edging grass. It is the challenge and the joy of gardening. It is the ever changing nature of the little world we call our own. But, of course, we are only a small part of what is happening in even our own gardens.

All of the native shrubs in my garden are favorites of mine, but of them all, the *Stewartia malacodendron* has the most meaning in my life. My specimen was ground layered by my mother from one at our family farm in South Carolina. I moved it from my first Chapel Hill Garden in 1992, and had it for 10 years before it bloomed. The *Stewartia* at our farm

always bloomed around May 11, which was my father's birthday. When my mother died a few years after my father, I learned the *Stewartia* was blooming at our farm and realized it was on his birthday. Now, each year when it blooms profusely in my garden it is a wonderful memorial for them both. Interestingly, it now blooms here even earlier than it did in South Carolina.



Photo by John Pringle

***Stewartia***

Another plant in the front garden from our farm is *Erythrina herbacea*. (Even though it is a bit uncertain for our area, it has done quite well so far. Its summer bloom is very striking and its seed pods in the fall are remarkable. I have long believed in



Photo by John Pringle

***Stewartia***



Photo by John Pringle

***Erythrina herbacea.***

family and friends, and this is in addition to the pleasure of creating and working on something you love. ♡



Photo by John Pringle

***Erythrina herbacea.***



# Ornamental and Native Plants In Woodland Gardens of the Piedmont

By Suzanne Edney

There is always much to be done to prepare any landscape to receive plants that ultimately give the landscape design it's final form and character. The property my husband and I purchased in 1991 was largely wooded and the previous owner had spent 3 years clearing all the underbrush and thinning smaller trees leaving behind mature Loblolly Pine, White and Turkey Oak, Sweetgum, Sassafras, Sourwood, Maple, Elm, Tulip Poplar and Black Gum. I had a clean slate to begin my gardens in these woodlands. I started from the house and continued to expand out under the trees with pathways, little side rooms, and destinations clothed with various plant combinations each year.



Photo by Suzanne Edney

**View from the porch**

Redbud, Firmiana simplex, Rhododendron austrinum, Agarista (Leucothoe) populifolia, Chindo Viburnum and Trochodendron aralioides.

Fillers beneath include Aspidistra elatior, Large Hosta cvs., Helleborus foetidus, Rhododendron linifolium, Satsuki Azaleas, Aucuba japonica,

Callicarpa americana and Dwarf Hinoki Cypress. The Trochodendron is thriving and I can always count on it's unusual blooms and seed heads to stop the casual visitor in their tracks where they can also examine the thin wrinkly foliage of Rhododendron linifolium at it's feet. The Firmiana simplex, Chinese Parasol Tree, seems to be an unusual specimen. It is either a dwarf (seedling) or dwarfed by the soil conditions here. After at least 15 years it is only 5' tall!



Photo by Suzanne Edney

**Trocodendron**

After 20 years I am still introducing new plants here and there, always trying to improve the experience of discovery along the rambles. Successful and not so successful choices have been made. I am one to dwell on the successes and surprises. When we moved in we were told there were Pink Lady Slippers in the back western woodland where I found a slight incline down to a wet area. Indeed, there was a meager patch. Through ice storms and hurricanes, though, that took down three 70-year old Loblolly Pines that seemed to shelter and nurture the Pink Slippers, the little beauties finally faded away. In their place the pathway has been enhanced with Epimedium, Danae racemosa, Helleborus x hybridus, sarcococca hookerianii var. pumila, Christmas Fern, Fatshedera x lizei, Variegated Solomon's Seal, Cyclamen coum, a sprinkling of Bergenia cordifolia and Ajuga 'Burgundy Glow'.

Surprises in the same area near a low lying boggy spot were the return

of Native Blueberry, Lizard's Tail and Broad Beech Fern as well as the vengeful but native Smilax and Grape Vine. An ornamental mid-plane now hovers over the introduced ground covers, well below the tallest native tree canopy. I planted Styx japonica, Chamaecyparis obtusa, Magnolia tripetala, Weeping Yau-pon, Sweet Bay Magnolia,

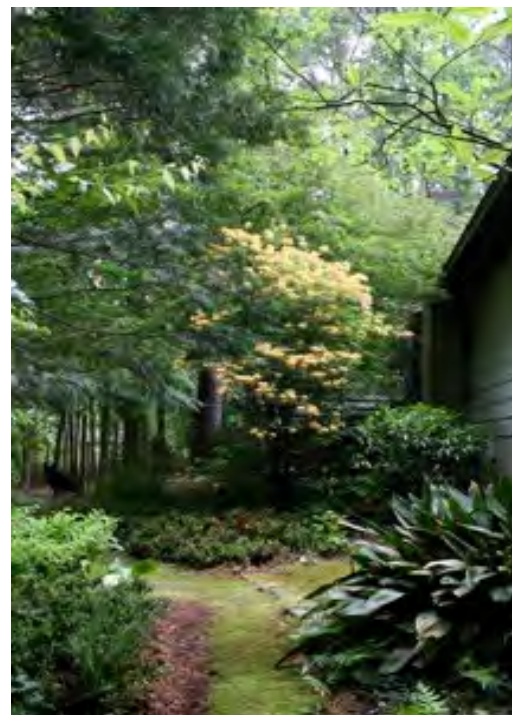


Photo by Suzanne Edney

**Rhododendrum austrinum**



Moving along the south side of the house, well shaded by 100' of woodland, is another mid-canopy of unusual ornamental trees over a path beside a moss garden. A loosely structured allee' of seven *Stewartia monadelphica*, purchased as 4' saplings from Camellia Forest Nursery in Chapel Hill, NC, create an natural arbor for about 30'. The thin sensuous trunks mature with beautiful buff and fawn colored peeling bark. They are called Tall *Stewartia* having the potential to reach 40' to 80' in their native lands of Eastern Asia. I have been most impressed with the nickel sized white flowers blooming at the same time as the *Hydrangea quercifolia* 'Snowflake' living happily below them. The show of orange to burgundy leaves on the *Stewartia* always lights up this part of the garden in late fall complementing the luscious colors of the 5' tall Snowflake *Hydrangea*. The understory along this path is populated by singular specimens of *Asimina triloba*, *Viburnum burkwoodii*, *Fatsia japonica*, *Loropetalum Zhou Zhou*, *Chionanthus virginicus*, *Ilex latifolium* and *Cryptomeria lobbii*, *Illicium*, *Daphniphyllum* and *Corlyopsis*.

Growing moss on this property has been effortless. The combination of a pH of 4.7, soil consistant with the profile of the Triassic Basin in NC which is 6" of sand over clay, and natural springs throughout the woodland also allows the growth of many companion plants that surround several moss gardens and pathways. Here are a few of the successes: *Selaginellas*, Tassel and Autumn Ferns, *Disporum sessile*, *Ardisia*, *Carex* cvs., a few *Tiarellas*, *Lobelia cardinalis*, Balloon Flower, Korean *Hosta* and *Pulmonaria*.

Heading East you come upon a stacked stone wall, about 2' high, retaining the slope in front of the house. Here is a vertical rock garden. When the wall was built 12 or so years ago I was at the ready with small treasures from Plant Delights Nursery to be inserted as each layer of stone was laid. Survivors in the wall now are a thick stand of Hart's Tongue Fern while nearby it is dripping with *Saxifraga stolonifera*. There are dots of *Corydalis cordifolia* and dramatic punctuation marks of *Dryopteris erythrosa* hanging well out from the wall in summer. At times a lone *Heuchera* seedling makes an appearance.



Photo by Suzanne Edney

***Stewartia monadelphica***



Photo by Suzanne Edney

***Saxifraga stolonifera***

you can view them from below the wall there is a handsome flowery display starting in February.

Between the shrub and tree border and the wall and house the rest of this garden has become largely an experiment in bulb layering. I have planted various collections, in the left over 8' x12' area, in loose ribbons that overlap each other in the design. Each thread of bulbs grows to the surface, sends out foliage and flower and then disappears for the next wave of interest throughout the year. In the winter, clusters of *Arum italicum* (the deepest bulbs) hold their sway as *Cyclamen* foli-

In the garden above the wall a few small trees frame the view. These are: *Acer palmatum* 'Seiryu', *Cercis canadensis* 'Oklahoma', Native *Sassifras* and *Dogwood*. Below is a collection of *Hydrangeas*, *Edgeworthia chrysantha*, *Spirea dolchicum*, *Hinoki cypress* cvs., *Daphne odora* and Dwarf *Aucuba*. Years ago Cornelius Swart gave me a single *Bracken* Fern, which I planted well out from the house. The colony it has created now extends out 50' in all directions. It is a very primitive looking 3' tall ground cover always trying to muscle it's way closer to the house. By virtue of the soil composition, though, it is also easy to edit out with a tug. I read somewhere that gardeners can use the harvested fronds of *Bracken* Fern as a natural weed suppressant when spread over the ground and left for a season. *Helleborus x hybridus* keep seeding throughout this bed and because



Photo by Suzanne Edney

**Top of the wall bulb layering area**



age keeps vigil beneath and beside them. Species of *Oxalis* stay up through December before the steady cold of January and February knock the little trifoliate umbrellas to the ground. *Cyclamen* and *Oxalis* corms are happiest at the soil surface, and



Photo by Suzanne Edney

***Calanthe discolor***

when planting summer *Coleus* and *Caladiums* are easy to set back in their places if inadvertently disturbed. *Iris cristata* and *I. histroides* cvs. poke up here and there. I recently transplanted a small group of *Rohdea japonica* beneath a *Chamaecyparis obtusa* 'Tetragona' that will stay evergreen through all seasons. I particularly love the splash of *Leucojum* and *Camassia* leaves staying power as the winter progresses followed in early and late spring by their two very different flower types.

Two years ago, at the top of the wall, I added a collection of heritage *Narcissus* from Old House Gardens. I planted them in the order of the year they were introduced to the public. But, over the years, Brent and Becky's Bulbs have been my number one source. There are a couple of *Hyacinthoides* that have made a brave comeback year after year in this sandy but constantly moist soil. I have a strong patch of *Calanthe discolor* in another distant part of my woodland garden and plan to introduce a division of it to this area come spring. I am always amazed and delighted when the *Calanthe* comes into flower. Its unusual stalks of miniature orchid flowers are a great show piece in a small garden. Having them closer to the house in this raised garden, to better appreciate their unusual beauty, will be a real treat.

I am always looking for filler plants for this area and a cou-

ple of really successful tries have been *Geranium macrorrhizum*, *Salvia koyoides* and *Asarum canadensis*. Low growing *Sedum* cultivars and *Lysimachia nummularia* work their way through and over the wall. I do admit to having a couple of decorative Ivy cultivars that are easily kept in check when the face of the wall is cleaned up in spring. At the other end of the height spectrum *Lilium formosanum* is a reliable 6' presence in the heat of summer along with 24" *Phlox paniculata*. They sway in the gentle breezes against a backdrop of the textured mix of plants mentioned above.

Standing on the stone terrace path, set in granite screenings which spans from the base of the stone wall to the house foundation 6-9' away, one can imagine it also as a rock garden of sorts. Seedlings of *Cyrtomium falcatum* (Holly Fern), *Danae racemosa* (Poet's Laurel), *Tricyrtus*, *Heuchera* and *Helleborus* have found homes in the wide cracks. About every 2-3 years the flagstones cover over with moss which can be harvested quite simply with a spatula to use on the paths or patch places in the moss gardens throughout the woodland.

My gardens in this woodland are only one example of perhaps hundreds found in the Piedmont area of NC. In 2010 I was able to visit 13 of them and photograph their progress throughout the year. (see *The Trillium*, Vol. 21, Issue 1, Jan. – Feb. 2011.)

I am extremely grateful to have been given the honor of being asked to give a second presentation to the NC Piedmont Chapter of the North America Rock Garden Society.

This time I will be focusing on the many wonderful plants that have found their way into the gardens in woodlands in and around Raleigh, NC. It has been quite an education being able to see a repetition of specimens in a number of the gardens I visited. Unique growing conditions and placement affect each of their performances. It has also been thrilling to discover totally unknown plants, to me, along other accomplished gardeners woodland paths. I look forward to sharing my photographic journey into these very special gardens in woodlands with you in February, 2012. ♡



**Summer display of wall garden and stone terrace**

Photo by Suzanne Edney

# Missing Spring?.....Plant Profiles for Your Enjoyment

By Mark Weathington, Assistant Director, JC Raulston Arboretum



**Common name:** Ground Orchid

**Botanical name:** *Bletilla striata*

**Family:** Orchid (Orchidaceae)



***Bletilla striata***

Photo by Mark Weathington

**Category:** Herbaceous perennial

**Primary uses:** Woodland gardens

**Dimensions:** 12 to 18 inches tall by 18 to 30 inches wide

**Culture:** Part to full shade. The easiest of all hardy orchids to grow, this plant is practically bullet-proof, only suffering from our occasional late spring frosts when warm spells in late winter encourage delicate new growth to emerge too early. Still, plants always rebound. Best in average to moist soils, cut back in fall, divide as needed every 3-5 years.

**Bloom time:** Spring

**Color:** Purple

**General attributes:** The pleated foliage of this Chinese orchid emerges in early spring and expands as the flowers open like a sable palm. The purple orchid flowers put one in mind of delicate, temperamental tropical orchids. This plant, however, is tough as nails and quickly forms thick colonies of exotic flowers. ♪

**Common name:** Candy Hearts Bishop's Cap  
**Botanical name:** *Epimedium sempervirens* 'Candy Hearts'

**Family:** Barberry (Berberidaceae)

**Category:** Perennial

**Primary uses:** Shady borders, woodland groundcover

**Dimensions:** 10 to 14 inches tall by 12 to 18 inches wide.

**Culture:** Partial to full shade. Prefers a moist, well-drained organic, woodland soil. Once established, it will tolerate some drought. It has very few pests although leafcutter bees will sometimes remove rounded segments from the leaf edges. Stems may be removed at anytime during winter, but should all be cut back before the flowers emerge in spring. The mat of rhizomes or underground stems can be divided in fall or winter.

**Bloom time:** Spring

**Color:** Pale pink



Photo by Mark Weathington

***Epimedium sempervirens* 'Candy Hearts'**

**General attributes:** 'Candy Hearts' is a fun form of bishop's cap for the spring garden. Newly emerging leaves are heart shaped and flushed with burgundy pink, especially around their edges for a delicate look. Clusters or relatively large pale pink flowers emerge about the same time as the leaves, hovering just above the foliage. Despite the dainty appearance, these are very tough, long-lived plants in the landscape. ♪



## NARGS Seed Packers

Thanks to those who helped with the packing for the NARGS Seed Exchange: A. Wilkers, Amelia Lane, Anne Porter, Bob Pries, Bobby Ward, Bobby Wilder, Charlie Kidder, Dave and Karen Duch, Doug Ruhren, J. Schlitt, Marilyn Golightly, Marlyn Miller, Mary McClure, Maurice and Gwen Farrier, Tim Alderton, Tom Harville, and Vivian Finkelstein. Appreciation to the JC Raulston Arboretum for accommodating the Seed Exchange packing.

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## Piedmont Chapter NARGS 2012 Programs—through April, 2012

All Meetings: JC Raulston Arboretum, 9:30 a.m.,

“Wildflowers Go Wild” Jan.21, 2012 — Betsy Pringle, Chapel Hill, N.C.

“Woodland Garden Plants, Part 2” Feb.18, 2012 - Suzanne Edney, Apex, N.C.

“One Writer's Garden: Eudora Welty's Home Place” March 17, 2012  
Susan Haltom, Ridgeland, Miss.

“Extra Dry, On the Rocks” April 21, 2012 — Charlie Kidder, Cary, N.C.

## Food Goodies to Share

If your last name begins with the letter below,  
please consider bringing something to share.

Jan L-M

Feb N –So

March Sp—A

April Any and all

## Plant Profile

by Mark Weatherington

**Common name:** Tasmanian  
Tiger Spurge

**Botanical name:** *Euphorbia*  
*characias* ‘Tasmanian Tiger’

**Family:** Euphorbiaceae  
(Milkweed)

**Category:** Evergreen sub-shrub

**Primary uses:** Dry garden, rock  
garden, perennial garden

**Dimensions:** 3’ tall by 4’ wide.

**Culture:** Full sun; grow in average to poor garden soil; prune flowering stems out after blooms fade.

**Bloom time:** Spring to early summer

**Color:** Chartreuse and cream

**General attributes:** *E. characias* ‘Tasmanian Tiger’ is a dense rounded shrub with grey-green foliage edged with white. In spring the flower heads emerge in clusters up to 6 inches across and potentially a foot long. The showy “flowers” are actually specialized leaves surrounding the inconspicuous true flowers. These specialized leaves will remain showy for an extended period after the flowers fade. ♡



**Tasmanian Tiger Spurge**

Photo by Mark Weatherington