

# Spanning the Gap

## Wildflower Wanderings



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(Left)  
Pink lady's slipper  
or moccasin flower.  
(Photo courtesy of  
Tiffany & Brian Hardiman)

*He is happiest who hath  
power  
to gather wisdom from a  
flower.*

Mary Howitt

After a long snowy winter, spring is beckoning to all. Early hikers will notice the skunk cabbage poking up through the frosty mud in wet, marshy areas. In its early stages, skunk cabbage is purple in color, eventually growing into a plant with large green leaves. None of the plant is considered edible, either by humans or animals.

Along the roadsides and in the woods where the shade is not too dense, several native species will be showing up in profusion.

**Wild geranium** (*geranium maculatum*), an herb, blooms from April to June. The five-parted hairy leaves, five rose-purple petals, and a long stylar beak or "crane's bill" distinguish this wildflower, the most common of some fifteen species in the northeast.

Growing in moist, humus-rich woodlands, the



Wild geranium. (NPS photo by  
Richard Frear)



delicate flowers of **bloodroot** (*sanguinaria canadensis*) also appear early. Its showy white flower, only briefly appearing in early spring colonies, is always partially clasped by a single, pale green, lobed leaf, which lasts much longer. It is a close relative of the celandine poppy. This plant's name arises from the orange-red juice of the stem and rhizome. American Indians used this staining juice, highly toxic if ingested, as a dye for baskets and clothing, but also as an insect repellent and facial paint.

**Pink lady's slipper** (*cypripedium acaule*) or **moccasin flower** (*shown above*), a member of the orchid family, can also be found around Hidden Lake, along with Jack-in-the-pulpit. If you develop rashes easily, handle lady's slippers with care. They can produce an irritating contact dermatitis (another of many good reasons not to pick them.)

Bloodroot.



Yellow lady's slipper (*cypripedium calceolus*). (NPS photo by Warren Bielenberg)



The purple or erect **trillium** (*trillium erectum*), sometimes called **wake-robin**, is found at Dingmans Falls PA. Three broad leaves and three showy petals mark all trillium.



(Left, top) Purple trillium. (Below, far left) Two purple trillium -- the plant on the left shows the 3 large green leaves and the 3 greenish stamens underside the flower.

(Below, middle) The white or "large-flowered" trillium (*trillium grandiflora*). (NPS photo by Don F. Mitchinson) (Below) Painted trillium (*trillium undulatum*), Rattlesnake Swamp.





**Jack in the pulpit**

While **Jack-in-the-pulpit** (*arisaema atrorubens*) is not technically an insect-trapping plant, the design of the flower often results in the entrapment of insects in its lowermost chamber. A green or purplish-brown *spathe*, often with stripes, encircles and forms a pulpit-like canopy over the "jack" or "preacher," a part called the *spadix*. During late

summer and early fall, scarlet berries on the plant are attractive to birds. Yet, ring-necked pheasants and wood thrushes seem to be the only birds that actually feed on them.



(Above) Jack in the pulpit.

(Left) Jack in the pulpit (NPS drawing from the Spring 1989 issue of *Spanning the Gap*, Vol. 11 No. 1)

The **trout lily** (*erythronium americanum*), also known as **adder's tongue**, **dogtooth violet** and **fawn lily**, can be found at Dingmans Falls. This plant's various common names point to other characteristics: its appearance during trout fishing season; its sharp, tongue-like shape as the shoot first emerges from the soil; and its two leaves standing erect like the ears of a fawn. Large colonies of this glossy-leaved little plant, with a solitary yellow flower, carpet the woodlands before the tree canopy shades the ground.

***Please remember that all wildflowers within Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area are protected by federal law and may not be picked or dug up for transplanting.***



Trout lily. (NPS photo)



Trout lily.