

Spring Ephemerals Guide

Hepatica

Hepatica nobilis



White trout Lily

Erythronium albidum



Dutchman's breeches

Dicentra cucullaria



Bloodroot

Sanguinaria canadensis



Rue Anemone

Thalictrum thalictroides



Bluebells

Mertensia virginica



Spring beauty

Claytonia virginica



Nodding trillium

Trillium cernuum



Woodland phlox

Phlox divaricata



March-April

Hepatica: Grows low to the ground and usually the first woodland spring ephemerals to appear.

White trout Lily: Distinct brown mottled leaves, with petals bending backwards. Usually the first to appear in Spring.

Dutchman's breeches: Identifiable by the individual flowers that resemble pants. Delicate blossoms are white, sometimes light pink.

Bloodroot: Identifiable by having one broad basal leaf. The root contains a red liquid that is poisonous when ingested.

Anemone: Grows low to the ground, often white to pale pink in color. Begins to appear late April to early May.

Bluebells: Found in woodlands throughout Iowa. Trumpet-like flowers range from light blue to purple.

Spring beauty: Grows low to the ground. Loose cluster of white to pink flowers with pink anthers.

Nodding trillium: Identifiable by having 3 petals, 3 sepals, and 3 leaves. Found on woodland hillsides with southern exposures.

Woodland phlox: Blue to lavender flowers appear in clusters. Grows 2-3 feet off the ground. Leaves and stem covered in fine hairs.

Jack-in-the-pulpit
Arisema triphyllum



Cutleaf toothwort
Cardamine concatenata



May apple
Podophyllum peltatum



Virginia Waterleaf
Hydrophyllum virginianum



Wild Geranium
Geranium maculatum



Aniseroot
Osmorhiza longistylis



Columbine
Aquilegia canadensis



Shooting star
Dodecatheon meadia



Prairie ragwort
Packera plattensis



Violet
Viola sororia



Bittercress
Cardamine bulbosa



Cream False Indigo
Baptisia bracteata



May-June

Jack-in-the-pulpit: Leaf is often streaked with green, brown, or yellow colors. Found in shady moist woodlands, and grows up to 12 inches tall.

Cutleaf toothwort: Clusters of small white or pink flowers that grow on a stem ranging from 6-12 inches tall. Leaves are deeply divided.

May apple: Easily identified by having large umbrella shaped leaves. Mature plants produce a white flower below the leaves that turns to fruit, but only edible when fully ripe.

Virginia Waterleaf: Commonly found in moist shady woodlands. Surface of leaves marked with spots that look like water drops. Clusters of pinkish or white flowers bloom from May to early July.

Wild Geranium: Purple flower clusters that can be up to 2 feet tall. Can be identified by lobed leaves before flower blooms.

Aniseroot: Stems grow 1-3 feet with soft hairs covering the surface. Grows on moist woodland slopes.

Columbine: Commonly found on woodland slopes. Five tubes divide the vibrant red flowers with long stamens hanging from center.

Shooting star: Flowers bloom April-June in prairies and open woodlands. Gets its name from the flower that points downward and pink to purple star-shaped petals.

Prairie ragwort: Often seen in widespread colonies growing 1-2 feet tall. Stem topped by clusters of yellow flowers resembling asters.

Violet: Very common in backyards, grasslands, woodlands, and prairies. Often the first to appear in Spring.

Bittercress: Light pink or white flowers. Grows 1-3 feet tall along streams and wetlands.

Cream False Indigo: Grows 1-2 feet with bushlike appearance. Flowers are light yellow and pea-like.