

First Flowers

Sharplobe Hepatica also Liverwort or Liverleaf

(Anemone hepatica)

Appearance: Flower begins as a small, white, fuzzy ball that unfurls into 5–7 elongated petals (color can be white, pink, or purple), about 4–6" tall.

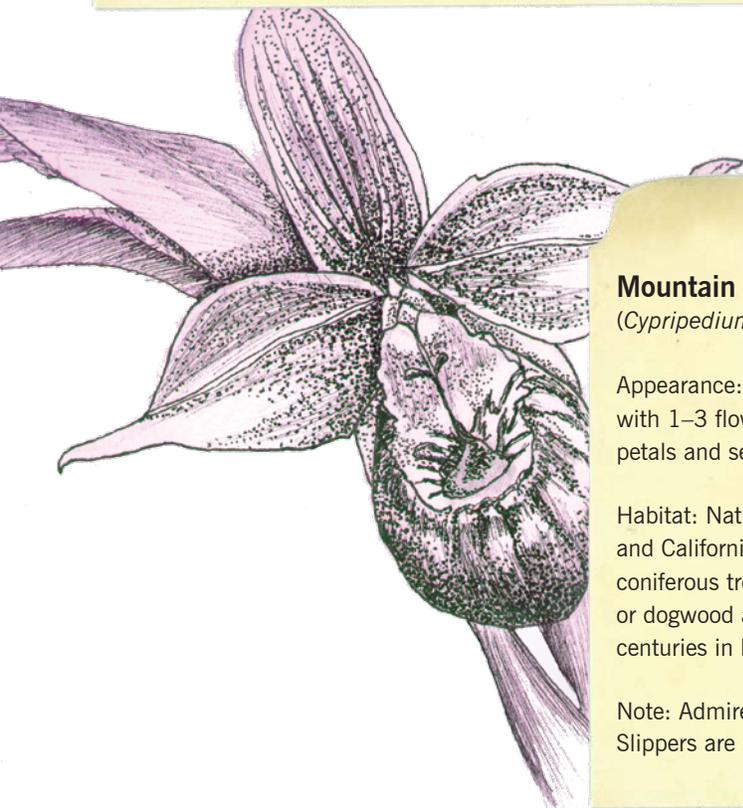
Habitat: Native to the Eastern U.S. in rich, usually deciduous, woodlands.

Note: Sharplobe Hepatica roots were used by the Iroquois to relieve shortness of breath in runners.



As soon as the snow melts, it's time to strike out on the nearest trail in search of the year's first wildflowers. The debut of these brave, little woodland beauties is one of nature's most glorious performances, and it happens right under our noses. Each white or pastel petal seems to promise us that we, too, have what it takes to reach for the sky—no matter how fragile we may feel. After all, 'tis the season of reawakening.

As joyous as it is to spot dainty darlings popping up among the leaves and moss, it's even more fun to be able to identify the flowers you find. So here's a take-along photo list of a few common early wildflowers that you can cut out for easy reference.



Mountain Lady's Slipper

(Cypripedium montanum)

Appearance: Grow individually or in clumps with 1–3 flowers per stem. Magenta-brown petals and sepals with white "slipper."

Habitat: Native to the Pacific Northwest and California. Usually found under or near coniferous trees or hardwoods such as aspen or dogwood and has been known to exist for centuries in habitat shaped by wildfire.

Note: Admire in the wild; some Lady's Slippers are endangered.



**Widow Grass
or Douglas' Grasswidow**

(Olsynium douglasii)

Appearance: Upright stems topped with 6-petaled, purple flowers (occasionally white or pink) on grass-like 4–15" stems from small bulbs.

Habitat: Native to western North America; grows in open areas in meadows or forests.

Note: This lovely harbinger of spring grows freely in the pastures around my farm.



Dwarf Snow Trillium

(Trillium L.)

Appearance: True to its name, everything appears in threes: 3 white flowers, 3 sepals, 3 heavy blue-green leaves.

Habitat: Its 39 species are found in every state except Nevada, Utah, Arizona, and New Mexico. Found in forested growths with areas of sunlight (dormant plants need to be warmed by early spring sun).

Note: Best left to be admired in the wild—disturbing the plant can kill it.



Nineleaf Biscuitroot

(Lomatium triternatum)

Appearance: Tall, hairy stems producing flower clusters with 4–20 rays ending in bright-yellow flowers. Member of the celery, carrot, and parsley family.

Habitat: Native to western North America on sunny valley bottoms, open ridges, and slopes of foothills and lower mountains. Provides crucial early forage for many wildlife and domestic animals.

Note: Historically, an important food and medicinal source for Native Americans.



**Dogtooth Violet
aka Glacier Lily, Snow Lily, or
Avalanche Lily**
(*Erythronium grandiflorum*)

Appearance: Nodding yellow flowers with 6 petals and 6 long stamens.

Habitat: Native to the western U.S. in shaded woods, stream banks, and subalpine meadows.

Note: A natural food source for bears, ground squirrels, and other wildlife. Bulbs were an occasional food source for Native Americans.



**Springbeauty
also Miner's Lettuce or Fairy Spud**
(*Claytonia L.*)

Appearance: Delicate, trailing groups of flowers with 5 pale pink or white (or more rarely, yellow) petals.

Habitat: Its 27 species can be found in most states in lawns, parks, forests, wetlands, and ravines, and on roadsides and bluffs.

Note: The California variety was used as a fresh salad green by miners in the 1849 Gold Rush.



Yellow Troutlily
(*Erythronium rostratum*)

Appearance: A solitary, slightly nodding yellow flower atop a 6" stem with mottled leaves.

Habitat: Native to the midwestern U.S. in moist, deciduous woodlands and openings.

Note: These lilies have been known to grow in colonies that are 300 years old.

