

School-to-Nature



Bottle Gentian

(Also called Blue Gentian and Closed Bottle Gentian)

The Bottle Gentian comes from the Family: Gentianaceae. They are **herbaceous**, meaning they have no woody stems. There are 33 kinds of gentian in the U.S., and they all flower very late in the warm season, August through October. The Gentian family has flowers of several colors, but those found on Conservancy lands are blue-purple flowers with white tips, and 1.5 inches long.

Bottle Gentians get that name from the unique shape of the flowers. They do not open, but the flowers have a white tip that guides bumblebees to climb inside; and this is when the bumblebee pollinates the flower. Once the bumblebee leaves, the white tip of the flower turns purple, signaling other bees that the nectar is gone. Bottle gentians are pollinated almost entirely by bumblebees, who are strong enough to climb into those closed flowers. Hummingbirds occasionally also pollinate them, having a thin beak that can probe down into the flowers.



Bottle Gentians grow in moist, rich soils, in shade or partial sun. They are seen most often on Conservancy lands in the woods, near swampy or muddy low areas. Look for Bottle Gentians very late in summer into autumn, at Trout Ponds Prairie.

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Caledonia Conservancy | P.O. Box 044714 | Racine, WI | 53404
262-498-4993 | www.CaledoniaConservancy.org