

School-to-Nature



Spring Beauty Wildflower

The Spring Beauty lives up to its name with pretty lavender-pink blossoms that bloom in the shady, moist areas of Conservancy woodlands where there is plenty of leaf mulch over the soil. This wildflower has been seen growing and blooming at Tabor Woods, Trout Ponds Prairie, and Short Road Trailhead.

Spring Beauty flowers from late April into May. Plants emerge as soon as the soil and air temperatures begin to warm. It is a perennial plant that forms small colonies through seeding. It can grow 6 inches tall, and plants may reach 8 inches wide. There are 15 species of Spring Beauty; the one we have in Caledonia is at the northernmost edge of its range, so we are fortunate that it can survive here.

Each Spring Beauty blossom lasts about three days, available to early pollinators like bees and flies. Once blooming has ended, seeds form in pods on the stems. As the pods dry later in summer, they break open, dispersing the seed nearby. Sometimes ants carry the seeds to new locations.

Native Americans and early settlers boiled or roasted the underground tubers. The boiled roots were sometimes called “fairy spuds” and the taste was compared to boiled chestnut- something like mashed potato. In fact, the whole plant is edible.

Spring Beauties belong to a group of plants called Ephemerals. This means the plant life cycle is a short one, with the plant and flowers drying up and disappearing from view quite early in the growing season. So- enjoy Spring Beauty while it lasts.

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