

# School-to-Nature



## Trillium

This wonderful wildflower blooms in many of the Conservancy woodlands from late April through May, found in shady areas with moist soils. You are more likely to find the white-flowered variety, but there are red and maroon varieties as well, shown above. Plants grow as three leaves and the flowers as three petals. Experienced observers can tell the difference between a trillium leaf and a poison ivy leaf, because the leaf veins and outer leaf edges are quite different. See the photos at the right. Poison ivy is the bottom photo.



Trilliums can grow to 16 inches tall, and the plants tend to grow in loose colonies. The white flowers turn pinkish as they mature. Each flower produces a seed pod, and as the plant dries, the pod breaks open to disperse the seeds. Trilliums also propagate through rhizomes, underground sprouts. Like all bulb plants, these plants are ephemeral, meaning the entire plant dries up by midsummer, and disappears; but the underground bulbs and rhizomes continue to live. Trilliums were once endangered, and they are still protected in many wild areas, including our Conservancy lands. This means that both plant and flowers are to be left alone. People who love them can find them at garden centers, to plant in their own yards.

Young trillium leaves are edible, raw or cooked. The bulbs and the seeds are mildly toxic. Historically, Native Americans used the root bulb to reduce swelling, and help in giving birth. They also created love potions and enemy hexes from Trillium.

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