

Spiderwort

Tradescantia ohiensis



You will find spiderwort growing on the north side of Middleton between Nottingham and the tennis court.

This wild flower is found in abundance across many parts of the US. It's a grass-like, weakly-upright plant that grows 1-3 ft tall and is commonly found in clumps in wooded areas and open fields. Spiderwort blooms from mid-spring through early summer when the temperature is still relatively cool. The three-petal flowers, which may be white, pink, blue or purple, unfold in the morning and close in the afternoon sun. On cloudy days, the blooms may remain open until evening. The stems and leaves, when broken, reveal a sticky, white sap that can cause skin irritation in some people and animals.

The flowers, stems and leaves of the spiderwort are edible; and various parts of the plant have been used in folk medicine for years. The most common use among Native Americans (especially the Seminole Tribe) is a male virility aid. It was also given to livestock as an aphrodisiac. Other herbal uses for spiderwort include as a poultice for spider and insect bites; a laxative; treatment for ulcers, kidney problems, and cancers; relief from menstrual discomfort; and as a remedy for stomachache.

Magically, spiderwort is thought to attract wealth and abundance. The flowers are associated with delicate beauty; and when added to the bathwater, they are said to help retain attractiveness.

Scientifically, the spiderwort is widely used in the study of genetics for determining how chromosomes affect cell behavior. The plant has proven to be very sensitive to radiation and other toxins in the environment. The flowers will turn from their usual shade to a bright pink when exposed to harmful pollutants! Other names include spider-lily, cradle-lily, oyster-plant and flowering inch plant.