

# Spring Beauty

*Claytonia virginica*

Look for Spring Beauty throughout the wetlands.

This attractive, perennial wildflower is a sure sign that spring has arrived. Only 3-6" tall, Spring Beauty thrives in the dappled sunlight and the moist, loamy soil of woodland areas. The



plant grows from a small underground corm that tastes much like a chestnut and is rich in nutrients including potassium, calcium and vitamins A and C.

The grass-like leaves are 2-5" long and about 1/4" wide. The stem is green or reddish-green and terminates in a floppy cluster of blossoms, each about 1/3" across. The tiny, fragrant flowers have five white petals with fine pink stripes. The blossoms open up on warm sunny days, and close during cloudy weather or at night. They are more or less erect while open, but nod downward while closed. Blooming begins mid-spring and both the flowers and foliage fade away by mid-summer. Despite its delicate appearance, Spring Beauty can survive significant land degradation such as grazing cattle and removal of trees.



The entire plant is edible with the young foliage and stems eaten raw in salads or steamed and served as greens. The flowers make an attractive edible garnish. Iroquois ground and boiled the roots and used the resulting liquid to treat children suffering from convulsions; adults ate the roots raw, believing they would permanently prevent conception. Algonquins cooked the roots and ate them as potatoes.

Various kinds of bees and flies visit the flowers for pollen, while butterflies and skippers come seeking nectar. The corms are dug up and eaten by small rodents, and the foliage is browsed sparingly by White-Tailed Deer.

Spring Beauty blooms March through May, depending upon weather conditions.