

Yellow Trout Lily

Erythronium americanum

Look for Yellow Trout Lily on both sides of the east path around the wetlands and in the woods behind the homes on Buckingham.

The common name "Trout Lily" refers to the appearance of this woodland plant's gray-green leaves mottled with brown or gray, which allegedly resemble the coloring of brook trout. Native to North America, it's one of the first plants to bloom in the spring, usually in March before the trees leaf out. The single nodding flower atop a short stalk is yellow on the inside and bronze-colored on the outside, with six petals that curve upward. Trout Lilies grow 6-8 inches tall in partially shady areas of rich meadows and deciduous woods. A young plant puts up just one leaf but mature plants have two.



The leaves and roots are edible and are often cooked and eaten as a nutritious and sweet vegetable. Medicinal uses go all the way back to Roman times when fresh leaves were bruised and applied to the feet to relieve the pain of sores and corns. Teas made in combination with Horsetail grass were considered good for internal inflammations. Trout Lily leaves and bulbs were once eaten as a contraceptive.

Although Trout Lily does not bloom for the first seven years of its life, the plant is busily sending out stolons from its underground corm. Corms for new plants form at the end of those stolons, and the process continues until the plants eventually form very dense groupings. Not every plant blooms in any given year but a colony, once established, can thrive for 300 years!

Also known as Dogtooth Violet and Adder's Tongue, Trout Lilies bloom late March through May.