



**Skunk Cabbage-** Yes, it doesn't smell very good but it is beautiful! It can be maroon, maroon and green, or green! Skunk cabbage makes its own heat to melt the snow around it so it can emerge very early. It's one of the first native flowers we see in the spring.

*Photo: K.Patrie*



**Hepatica-** The tiny white flowers will be blooming for the next few weeks. The leaves are maroon and green, others more maroon. The leaves are liver shaped, thus the common name of liverleaf.



**Scarlett Cup Fungi-** How many can you find? They made be hidden under leaves. These are the first mushrooms of the year.



**moss** do you see? Can you find any moss that has sporophytes, the taller stems with a seed-like structure on top (you need to get close up to see.) Did you know that moss was the first living thing on earth? That was 500 million years ago!



Can you find any **yellow buds on a tree**? You have to look closely. If you find one you will know it is a Hickory, bitternut (*Carya cordiformis*). This is the only Michigan tree with yellow buds. And yes, it produces Hickory nuts!

If you find interesting things you aren't able to identify, take a photo or two and use the image look-up on Google when you get home. Have fun!

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## [Spring Ephemerals at Dowagiac Woods](#)

Nancy Small

Why take a trip to Dowagiac Woods every spring? For its dense and richly diverse spring wildflowers, many of them ready to bloom soon.



sheets of large-flowered white trillium and marsh marigolds, there are also many subtler delights. Hepatica (*left, A. Babcock*) (whose blooms) range in color from white through pink and pale violet to almost navy-blue. Three kinds of “anemone”: wood (*A. quinquefolia*), true rue (*Anemonella thalictroides*),

and false rue (*Isopyrum biternatum*), the latter the most graceful and delicate in appearance, with buds as round as pearls.

Three kinds of Solomon’s seal: true (*Polygonatum biflorum*), starry (*Smilacina stellata*), and false (*S. racemosa*). Several kinds of violets: cream (*Viola striata*), downy yellow (*V. pubescens*), common blue (*V. papilionacea*), Canada (*V. canadensis*), and long-spurred (*V. rostrata*), which is pale lilac. And, of course, spring beauties, Dutchman’s breeches, squirrel corn, trout lilies, Jacob’s ladder, bellwort, blue cohosh, spicebush, with delicate yellow-green flowers bursting from bare branches—in short, the spring flowers we know and love crowded together in wonderful and sometimes surprising combinations.



*Trout lily leaves (green w/maroon leaves, yellow flowers coming soon) Photo: BJ Campbell.*

*Prairie trillium (green w/silver leaves, maroon blossom) Photo: K.Patrie*

According to the plant list for visitors, (*see note below*) Dowagiac Woods also has twisted stalk (*Streptopus amplexifolius*), but I've never seen it there (or anywhere else). As shown in pictures, the plant has branching zig-zag stalks, with leaves like a Solomon's seal, and long, delicate flowerstalks, curiously curved and angled, that hang from the leaf axils. Flowers are small and bell-shaped, with 6 recurved segments, their color white or greenish-white. Another, more evocative, common name is white mandarin (for the flower's fancied resemblance to a Chinese hat?).

Dwarf ginseng (*Panax trifolium*) is also at Dowagiac, only 4 to 8 inches high, with rounded clusters of tiny white flowers and a whorl of 3 compound leaves, each with 3-5 leaflets. The flowers are followed by yellow berries.



*Bloodroot (Sanguinaria canadensis) w/native bee*

*Cutleaf toothwort (Dentaria laciniata). Photos: K.Patrie*

am now convinced is two-leaved toothwort (*Dentaria diphylla*, according to Newcomb, *Cardamine diphylla*, according to Gleason and Cronquist). The kind of toothwort we usually see is cut-leaved (*D. laciniata*), and Dowagiac has that as well. Perhaps if the two-leaved toothwort had been in bloom on any of those trips, we would have recognized it from its small white, four-petaled flower. Plants normally have 2 compound leaves, each with 3 sizeable egg-shaped leaflets, and they occur in fairly large numbers along the main path not far from the entrance.



If you've never been to Dowagiac Woods, go this year to see the complexity and beauty of this wondrous site. If you've been before, go again; you're bound to see things you've missed on earlier trips or familiar things in a new light.

*Violet (Viola sp.)*

*Photo: K.Patrie*

*Editor's Note:* In lieu of our canceled May 2 field trip to the Love Creek Nature Center, I offer this article by the late Nancy Small. This article was originally published in the March/April 2007 edition of *Seedlings*. To see the flowers Nancy mentions, visit Dowagiac Woods the last week of April or the first week of May, keeping the social/physical distancing recommendations in mind, of course.

I was unable to locate a plant list, which Nancy referenced. I did however find an information sheet from the [Michigan Nature Association](#) that contains information about the features and origins of Dowagiac Woods, a basic map of the trails, and directions and parking information. -KP

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## Our Favorite Things

**Kim Patrie** *Photo: S.Patrie*

we're all feeling a bit unsettled and restless. Yet nature holds its anti-anxiety balm in wait for us; all we need do is wander outdoors.

I asked some of my Wild Ones friends about their favorite ways to be outdoors, and below are the lovely answers I received, which I share (by permission) with you:



**TOM & RUTH S.:** We walk at the [Asylum Lake Preserve](#). It's varied, from open grassland and savanna to woodland, wetland, and lakes. It's quiet. It's conveniently nearby. We talk about the trees, the other plants, the stones, and the birds. We also talk to them, and we listen.

We also walk our own yard (2502 Waite Ave.) and observe what's happening there. Other walkers are always welcome (during daylight hours) to walk the yard, observe, sit, meditate, and talk with us (at a "social distance").

**DAVID R.:** There is a cure for Cabin Fever: Get outside. Social distancing is easier, and spring is still coming. That is one way at least in which life is still the same.

At [Bow in the Clouds Preserve](#) this weekend there was not much going on besides skunk cabbage and diamond willow buds, and our beloved little Swan Pond looked brown and sad. But wait -- this is the same place that was just a tangle of buckthorn and autumn olive before restoration. Who even knew a pond was there? Now it is an open area, face to the sun, seeded last year and waiting for spring. Go check out your favorite preserve and see how things are progressing. Guaranteed to make your day.

**RUTH C.:** I've spent a lot of time at [Eliason Nature Reserve](#), walking and helping clear invasive plants. I like to see how it changes over the seasons, and what native plants I can find. The people who walk and bike there are friendly and considerate. Sort of a southern version of the trail in [Portage Creek Bicentennial Park](#).

It can be accessed from a number of different points from downtown, Mosel Ave., F Ave. (no parking), the Kalamazoo Nature Center, and D Ave. From downtown to G Ave. the trail runs near the Kalamazoo River which is visible for much of the way. At G Ave. (and corner of Pitcher St.) it turns away from the river and passes mostly through deciduous woods for about a mile, arriving near N. Westnedge Ave at F Ave. The section from F Ave to the Nature Center runs close to Westnedge up to the Nature Center. The trail in this area passes by an attractive reconstructed prairie established by the Nature Center. North of the Nature Center it passes through a beautiful beech-maple woods with abundant spring wildflowers. This latter portion of the trail can be reached from a parking area at the Nature Center or from D Ave. It is likely to be another couple of weeks before there is much sign of plant growth at the prairie or for the spring wildflowers to be evident.

Another place to walk is along the [Kal-Haven Trail](#), although it is likely to have more people on it. A section that I like (because of spring wildflowers - at the right time) is from the trail head on 10th St. to F Ave. It mostly passes through fairly mature deciduous woods with quite a bit of topographic variation. Of course there are other sections of it as well.

**MARGO R:** Getting out into "nature" for me involves yard projects. Recently, I converted the grass area around a fallen tree trunk into a planting area for native plants. Now awaiting warmer soil before adding milkweed seeds and other pollinating plants. There is even more peacefulness outside than before the "shutdown" (even if laboring to remove turf) because sounds of animal and wind activity dominate when the background noise from automobiles and airplanes is gone. Take some time to sit or walk outside and enjoy the ambiance of nature.

**ILSE G.:** I suffer from winter sensory deprivation of the "natural sound" kind. So soon after the spring equinox, on the 1<sup>st</sup> evening that it is about 50 degrees and raining, we visit our favorite frog spot. While spring peepers and chorus frogs vocalize for several weeks in spring, wood frogs do so very early and only for a very short time. These are a few of my favorite things....

Remember to keep a 6 ft. distance between yourself and other outdoor enthusiasts. If you drive out somewhere and the parking lot is full upon arrival, choose a different place for that day. Mid- to late-morning there is a good chance for uncrowded walking.

sunshine.

And don't forget to offer up your gratitude for the life-affirming benefits of our natural world.

*For more information on how America has taken to the outdoors in this uncertain time, [See This Article.](#)*

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