

## 2012 March Plant of the Month

**May Apple** -*Podophyllum peltatum* L.



The Plant of the Month for March is May Apple, *Podophyllum peltatum*. The early spring herb will be poking its nose through the forest leaves, displaying a hidden treasure of a flower under its large and broad peltate leaf. The term peltate refers to the leaf stem. This arrangement attaches to the center of the leaf, radiating out from the central stalk. The stem's 2 leaves will appear late March in the southern part of the state and as late as May in Sussex County. The leaves are quickly followed by the silver dollar sized, creamy white petal flower attached to the center leaf stalk.

May apple is a name applied to this plant because of its large fleshy berry that appears soon after the flower fades. Another common name is mandrake, an old world name applied to this plant based on its root shape. Native Americans used the plant for a variety of ailments. Its fruit has been used as a food and the roots have been used as an insecticide.

May apple is common in rich mesic woodlands throughout the state with the exception of the Pine Barren where it is completely absent.