

2017 July *Guess that Plant*



Saponaria officinalis L. Bouncing Bet, Soapwort

The July *Guess that Plant* was *Saponaria officinalis*. Bouncing Bet is a common roadside perennial found throughout the State. It is a Pink (Caryophyllaceae) native to northern Europe. It has been a member of our flora for more than a century. The plant is striking in full bloom, when light pink petals grace clusters of elongate calyx.

The common name soapwort comes from the presence of natural lipids that create a foaming agent as seen in our bath soaps. Although it was introduced, Eastern Native Americans quickly learn the utility of the plant, using its juices as a shampoo and other parts of the plants as an analgesic poultice. Bouncing Bet flowers throughout the summer, and should be visible until the end of August. Search for this plant along dry roadsides, railroads and field edges.

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