

May Plant of the Month:

Common Blue Violet, *Viola sororia* Willd.



Violets are some of May's flowers that benefited from our April showers. New Jersey is fortunate to support many species of this native wildflower. Some violet flowers are stemmed and some are stem less. Some are yellow, and some are white, but most are blue. Out of this selection we have chosen May's **Plant of the Month**. The selected violet is our New Jersey State Flower, Common Blue Violet, *Viola sororia*. This attractive plant is native to New Jersey and is wide spread throughout the state outside of the Pine Barrens.

Blue Violet was designated the New Jersey state flower by Legislature resolution in 1913. Unfortunately the resolution ended in 1914. It would not gain status as the State wild flower for nearly fifty years. The legislation specifically designating the Common Meadow Violet (*Viola sororia*) as the state flower in 1971, at the urging of New Jersey's garden clubs. See <http://www.state.nj.us/njfacts/flower.htm> .

Common blue or the common meadow violet was once combined with *Viola papilionaceae*. Today's taxonomists separate our plants and linked them to a common species identified as *Viola sororia*. It is a stem less species with the lateral flower petal covered with club shaped hairs. This common dark purple-blue flower is visible right now on rich soils, slopes, door steps and roadside throughout New Jersey. This species is nearly absent in the heart of the Pine Barrens but is present at old home sites.