

2012 February Plant of the Month



Spring Beauty

Claytonia virginica L.

It sure doesn't feel like winter, so we at FNJ are moving the seasons up a month or so! The selected Plant of the Month for February is the common Spring Beauty. This diminutive spring wild flower is widely established on New Jersey's forest floors. Spring Beauty is one of our earliest spring flowers, poking a small panicle of flower buds through leaves and sometimes snow. The plant grows in rich woodlands and floodplains from Quebec to Georgia and west in the forests to Minnesota. The plant flowers from late March through early May.

Spring beauty is another botanical wonder. It's a member of the Purslane Family, Portulacaceae. Like so many spring flowering herbs found on North America's forest floor, these plants achieve all of their photosynthesis in a short few week period in spring, establishing large bulbous tubers. The tubers provide starch as energy for its near year underground as well as the bust of energy needed to create the buds, leaves and flowers. The tubers were described by Mr. Gibbons as our own tiny potatoes. The Algonquin culture used them as food and as a medicine to treat convulsions.

With this warm winter temperatures, it is sure to awaken the tubers and the buds of this perennial favorite. So be prepared to see this New Jersey native spring up as our season begins. JRA, 2/12