

May 2019 Plant of the Month



Viola lanceolata L., Lance-leaf, or bog white violet

May 2019's **Plant of the Month** is one of New Jersey's most widespread spring wildflowers, the lance-leaf violet. The USDA Plants Database applies a different name, the bog white violet. This name identifies its common habitat: open acidic wetlands, lakesides, bogs and meadows. Mary Hough (1983) recorded voucher specimens from every New Jersey county with the exception of Sussex and Passaic. Lance leaf violet hybridizes with *Viola macloskeyi* (*V. pallens*, smooth with violet; refer to Bill Olson's treatment of Genus *Viola* on the **Families and Genera Recognized in NJ**, this web page) to produce another common and often misidentified species, *V. x primulifolium*. The later violet is more common on Inner Coastal Plain mesic forests and stream banks.

Viola lanceolata flowers from mid April into early May. It is distinguished from its other white flowered violets by its narrow, strap like leaves and narrow spreading rhizomes. Native Americans used members of the genus for a variety of medicinal purposes. Similar species with tender spring leaves were collected for food.

JRA, 5/2019