

## May 2021 Plant of the Month



*Viola affinis* Le Conte Le Conte's or Sand Violet.

The May *Plant of the Month* and *Guess that Plant* follow the same floristic theme, and are both members of the Violaceae, the violet family. The May *Plant of the Month* is Le Conte's or Sand violet. The species is widely distributed. It grows from the Upper Mississippi Valley east to the Atlantic Coastal Plain, north to Massachusetts and south through the Piedmont and Southern Coastal Plain into Texas. Mary Hough (1983) documented the species throughout New Jersey's Inner Coastal Plain Counties, and across the Piedmont. The USDA Plants Database expands that distribution across all of New Jersey's northern counties with the exception of Union, Middlesex, Monmouth and Ocean counties.

The *Plant of the Month* is one of New Jersey's many native perennial violets. Bill Olsen's 2010 list on this web page ("*The Flora of NJ tab*") is the Flora of NJ's template for nomenclature and related species. The Le Conte or Sand violet is acaulescent (stem less) and glabrous with blue flowers. It differs from the similar entire leaf species common blue, *Viola sororia*, with its slightly pubescent seed capsule.

Our *Plant of the Month* flowers from mid-April into early May, and its most common on moist forest or moist road sides. The photo for this month's image is from the banks of the Raccoon Creek, in Woolwich NJ, where it was mixed with a variety of spring flowers, including *Viola sororia* and *Viola bicolor*. Native American's knew this and its related species as a food and medicine. It was used in the east as an anti-diarrheal and as an analgesic for headaches. The cool spring of 2021 will keep this plant flowering for a while aiding those on the lookout for Le Conte's or Sand violet. Watch the patches of blue flowers, and look for the smooth leaves to be sure.

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