Acknowledgments

The Cylburn Arboretum Association recognizes Joyce Holmes, chair of Landscape Committee and chair of Trails and Wildflowers Committee, Dwight Johnson, member of the Cylburn Education Committee, and Kirsten Emigholz for volunteering their time and knowledge in putting together this field guide.

Plant illustrations appear courtesy of the United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service’s Plants Database: plants.usda.gov.
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Introduction

This guide was written to help Cylburn visitors identify and learn about the spring ephemeral flowers that grow here. “Spring ephemerals” are woodland plants that leaf out and bloom early in the spring before the trees develop their leaves. After the trees leaf out, the ephemeral flowers are deprived of light and gradually disappear. But, they do not die. The energy that they gathered during their brief appearance is stored underground until the following spring.

The flowers in this guide can be seen in the months of April and May. All of them will not be in bloom at the same time.

Visitors often ask whether these flowers can be grown in the garden. Most of them can, but some may not be considered good garden plants because both the flowers and the leaves die out early in the summer. This guide points out the ones that have persistent foliage and are available commercially. All spring ephemerals are “perennials,” meaning that, once established, they will return each year with no need to replant.

Most of the flowers you see in the Cylburn woods were planted here so visitors could enjoy them while staying on the paths, and many have spread throughout these woods. Some of them are commonly found in the woods throughout the Baltimore area, and others are more rare. All of the plants deliberately planted along Cylburn’s trails are native to the eastern half of North America.

CAUTION

~ DO NOT PICK OR EAT ANY PLANTS AT CYLBURN ~

Many plants in the woods are POISONOUS and others are EXTREMELY IRRITATING TO THE SKIN. Like most Maryland woods, Cylburn Arboretum contains poison ivy.

By being careful with our plants, you will protect yourself and preserve our environment for others to enjoy. You should also be aware that picking plants in Baltimore’s public parks is prohibited by law.
How to Use This Guide

This guide is organized by color (WHITE — YELLOW—GREEN — PINK/RED — BLUE/VIOLET), and within each color by the number of petals (or petal-like structures). With those two pieces of information you should be able to quickly find the right page, and then look at the illustrations to identify the plant.

If you find a flower that you cannot identify, you may contact the Cylburn Naturalist, Glenda Weber, at 410-396-7839.

If you enjoyed trying your hand at flower identification with this little guide, then you might want to explore some of the many parks and woods in Maryland with a more complete field guide. These are excellent choices:


A Word About Plant Names

Most of the flowers listed here have more than one common name. We have chosen the names we believe are most commonly used in Maryland.

Scientific names change as botanists revise their views on plant classification. We have tried to use the most up-to-date scientific names, and in some cases, these are different from those found in other books, depending on when they were published. A good source of terminology and a great deal of other information about plants can be found on the United States Department of Agriculture’s website: plants.usda.gov.
### Wildflower Identification Key

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Spring Wildflowers at Cylburn

WHITE

3 PETALS

1. White Trillium - *Trillium grandiflorum*
   Native to Maryland

   Height: 8-20 inches

   Flower: 3 white petals above 3 green sepals

   Leaf: 3 wide leaves with pointed tips at the top of a single stem

   Habitat: Woods

   Trilliums are appreciated for their beauty but not for their smell, which is unappealing to humans but attractive to insects.

   Deer also love Trillium and these lovely flowers are becoming less common due to the over-abundance of deer in our forests.

WHITE

4 PETALS

1. Garlic Mustard - *Alliaria petiolata*
   Native to Europe

   Height: 12-40 inches

   Flower: Clusters of small, white, 4-petaled flowers

   Leaf: Coarsely veined and toothed; generally triangular in shape. Smells like onion when crushed
Habitat: Everywhere

Extremely destructive to both natural environments and agriculture, this alien plant is one of our most noxious weeds. It is capable of dominating the understory of a forest, driving out native species.

This plant was brought to North America by early settlers from Europe who valued its herbal properties. In Europe, it has natural enemies that keep its population under control. Here, it has no predators. Sadly, the native deer avoid Garlic Mustard and many other alien plants. Thus, the overpopulation of deer has contributed to an artificial competitive advantage for alien plants.

2. Cutleaf Toothwort - *Cardamine concatenata*
   Native to Maryland

Height: 4-8 inches

Flower: White or pale pink in loose clusters; 4 petals

Leaf: Deeply cut into several long lobes, which are usually toothed

Habitat: Woods

The name “Toothwort” does not refer to the shape of the leaves, but to the ivory colored underground stems (rhizomes), which have sharp knobs like little teeth. In times past, people believed that the shape of plant
parts were clues to their medicinal use, and they were accordingly named. This plant was once used for toothaches, although we now know it is useless for this purpose.

Cutleaf Toothwort is one of the most common spring wildflowers throughout the woods of Maryland.

This plant was formerly called “Dentaria concatenata.” See also, Slender Toothwort, below.

3. **Slender Toothwort - *Cardamine angustata***

Native to Maryland

**Height:** 4-8 inches

**Flower:** White or pale pink in loose clusters; 4 petals

**Leaf:** Two types. Those growing directly from the ground are several inches wide and have 3 oval, toothed lobes. Stem leaves are deeply cut into very narrow lobes.

**Habitat:** Woods

This plant is easily confused with Cutleaf Toothwort, above. But, Cutleaf Toothwort lacks the broad, three-lobed basal leaves. Slender Toothwort is the less common of the two species, although it can be found in Maryland woods.

This plant was formerly called, “Dentaria heterophylla.”
1. **False Rue Anemone - *Enemion biternatum***
   Native to Midwestern States

   **Height:** 4-10 inches  
   **Flower:** White; 5 regular petals  
   **Leaf:** Delicate 3-parted leaflet  
   **Habitat:** Woods

   You can look high and low for this plant in the Maryland woods and you will not find it growing in the wild. You might find it in a few counties in New York and Virginia, but it is found mainly in the central Midwestern states.

   This plant was formerly called “*Isopyrum biternatum.*”

2. **Foamflower - *Tiarella cordifolia***
   Native to Maryland

   **Height:** Flowers hovering 5-15 inches above leaves  
   **Flower:** Many tiny white flowers on a thin stalk  
   **Leaf:** Toothed on a stem growing right from the ground  
   **Habitat:** Woods

   Foamflower is not common in the wild in the Baltimore area. It is found more often in the mountains. The name comes from
the foam-like appearance of the flowers, especially when several of them are growing in a patch.

Foamflower makes an excellent garden plant. The flowers last for several weeks, and the foliage persists into mid-autumn. Several different cultivars are widely available in garden centers.

3. **Wood Anemone - *Anemone quinquesfolia***  
Native to Maryland

**Height:** 2-12 inches

**Flower:** White; 5 (or more) petal-like sepals

**Leaf:** 3-5 leaflets in a whorl

**Habitat:** Woods

Like many woodland wildflowers, Wood Anemone requires its seeds to be planted in the ground. This is accomplished by producing on the seed a small appendage that is eaten by ants. The ants carry the seeds back to the colony where they eat the nutritious appendage, and discard the seed in an unused tunnel. There, if conditions are right, the seed will germinate and a new plant will grow.

4. **Miterwort - *Mitella diphylla***  
Native to Maryland

**Height:** 6-16 inches

**Flower:** White and very small on a slender stem. Look closely, they are shaped like tiny snowflakes.
Leaf: Two toothed stem leaves, opposite each other, heart-shaped basal leaves

Habitat: Woods

On your next walk at Cylburn, bring a hand lens or reading lens, and take a close look at these beautiful little flowers.

Also known as “Bishop’s Cap,” Miterwort has a seed pod shaped like a bishop’s miter, or cap. It is pollinated by tiny flies and short-tongued bees.

Miterwort can be found in Maryland woods.

WHITE

1. Solomon’s Seal - Polygonatum biflorum
   Native to Maryland

Height: 1-2 feet

Flower: Greenish white, hanging in pairs along the underside of the stem

Leaf: Smooth edged with parallel veins; pale underside

Habitat: Woods

A common member of the lily family, this plant can be seen on many woodland walks. Later in the season, purple berries replace the flowers.
2. **False Solomon’s Seal - *Maianthemum racemosum***  
Native to Maryland

**Height:** 1-2 feet

**Flower:** White clusters at the end of the stems; prominent red berries

**Leaf:** Smooth edged with parallel veins; green underside

**Habitat:** Woods

The term “false” should not be viewed as disparaging. It simply means that the species resembles another species. But to avoid any suggestion of insult to this graceful member of our woodland community, some insist on calling it “Solomon’s Plume.”

The scientific name is also inaccurate. The name “racemosa” implies the flower structure is a raceme, but in reality it is a panicle, so that the name should be “*Maianthemum paniculatum.*” This plant was formerly called “*Smilacena racemosa.*”

3. **Mayapple - *Podophyllum peltatum***  
Native to Maryland

**Height:** 6-20 inches

**Flower:** White; cup-shaped and located below the leaves

**Leaf:** Umbrella-shaped at the end of a stem. When the plant matures and produces 2 “umbrellas,” it will flower. This can take many years.

**Habitat:** Moist woods
The name “Mayapple” comes from the fruit, which ripens in May, and was used in colonial times to make pies. But beware, the fruit is poisonous if picked too early. The stems and roots are also extremely toxic. In fact, this is one of the most poisonous plants in the woods. Native Americans are said to have used it to cause death.

Box turtles eat Mayapple fruits and they are believed to be the major disperser of its seeds. Box turtles are becoming less common because of roads and automobiles, but Mayapple is such a long-lived plant that we may not see the effects of the diminished population of box turtles for decades.

**WHITE**

1. Bloodroot
   *Sanguinaria Canadensis*
   Native to Maryland

   **Height:** 2-8 inches

   **Flower:** Pure white; many regular petals with a golden center

   **Leaf:** A single shield-like leaf emerging from the ground

   **Habitat:** Woods
If you dug into the ground you would find a red root-like structure known as a rhizome — really an underground stem used to store food for the plant. (Please DO NOT dig up this plant.) Its red color gave the plant its name. Native Americans used it as a dye for baskets, pottery and war paint.

Bloodroot contains a chemical that is effective in fighting dental plaque and is used in some commercial products. It must be handled with care because it can be irritating to the skin.

2. **Twinleaf - *Jeffersonia diphylla***
   Native to Maryland

**Height**: 4-18 inches

**Flower**: Bright white with 8 regular petals

**Leaf**: Like a large bow tie; what looks like two identical leaves is actually a single divided leaf

**Habitat**: Woods

This plant was named in 1792 to honor Thomas Jefferson during his service as the first Secretary of State of the United States under President George Washington. Jefferson grew Twinleaf in his garden at Monticello, where it can still be seen today.

Twinleaf is rare in Maryland. The Potomac Gorge is the best place to see it in the wild.

Twinleaf can be purchased but it is not widely available commercially, probably because of its short blooming time, and because it takes five to eight years to mature from seed to a flowering plant.
3. Rue Anemone - *Thalictrum thalictroides*
Native to Maryland

**Height**: 5-8 inches

**Flower**: 6-10 white petal-like sepals

**Leaf**: Compound with 3 roundish leaflets; often toothed at the end

**Habitat**: Woods

Rue Anemone can easily be confused with Wood Anemone, described above, but Wood Anemone sends up only single flowers rather than clusters, and has deeply toothed leaves. Both are pollinated by wind, and both depend on ants to disperse their seed. However, they are not as closely related as their names would imply.

This plant was formerly known as “*Anemonella thalictroides*.”

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**WHITE**

1. Dutchman’s Breeches
   *Dicentra cucullaria*
   Native to Maryland

**Height**: 4-12 inches

**Flower**: White with a yellow tip; shaped like a little pair of breeches

**Leaf**: Delicate and feathery

**Habitat**: Woods
The nectar is in the upper tip of the flower, exactly 8 mm from the opening at the bottom. This is the length of a bumble-bee’s tongue, and the bumble-bee is the pollinator for this and many other early spring wildflowers. The bumble-bee queen survives the winter and becomes active in early spring. She builds a nest and lays her eggs. Then she must find nectar and pollen to feed herself and her brood.

See also, Squirrel Corn, below.

2. **Squirrel Corn - Dicentra canadensis**  
Native to Maryland

**Height:** 4-12 inches

**Flower:** White, similar to Dutchman’s Breeches, above, but with pinkish tips

**Leaf:** Delicate and feathery

**Habitat:** Woods

This plant can be difficult to distinguish from Dutchman’s Breeches, above. It blooms a little later, and has yellow underground tubers that look like kernels of corn. (Please DO NOT dig up this plant.)

Both Squirrel Corn and Dutchman’s Breeches are common in Maryland woods. Both can also be charming in the garden in early spring, but their foliage dies out fast and they are not widely available commercially.
YELLOW

1. **Yellow Trillium - *Trillium luteum***
   Native to Maryland

   **Height:** 8-22 inches

   **Flower:** 3 yellow petals; 3 green sepals

   **Leaf:** 3-part; mottled

   **Habitat:** Woods

   This plant belongs to a mainly southern species, not common in Maryland. There is even controversy among botanists as to whether it is a separate species or a variety of one of the other species of trillium.

YELLOW

1. **Celandine Poppy - *Stylophorum diphyllum***
   Native to Maryland

   **Height:** 12–18 inches

   **Flower:** Bright yellow; 4 regular petals

   **Leaf:** Highly dissected; opposite growth pattern

   **Habitat:** Woods

   This mainly Midwestern species is rare in the wild in Maryland. All members of the poppy family must be handled with care because they can be
irritating to the skin. Some are used for medicinal purposes and some are highly toxic.

Celandine Poppy (also known as Wood Poppy) is sold at garden centers and will thrive in rich soil in the shade.

2. **Celandine - *Chelidonium majus***  
   **Native to Europe**

**Height:** 8-24 inches  
**Flower:** Yellow; 4 regular petals  
**Leaf:** Dissected; alternative growth pattern  
**Habitat:** Open woods

Celandine can be confused with Celandine Poppy, but the flower is smaller and the leaves grow alternately instead of opposite each other. Also, Celandine blooms throughout the summer, and even into the fall.

This European native was used for centuries by European herbalists for the treatment of warts and other medical problems. The juice is irritating to the skin. This potentially invasive non-native is weeded out at Cylburn.
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YELLOW 5 PETALS

1. Green and Gold - *Chrysogonum virginianum*
   Native to Maryland

   **Height:** 2-16 inches

   **Flower:** 5 yellow petal-like parts

   **Leaf:** Dark green and shallowly toothed, appearing to arise from the ground

   **Habitat:** Open woods and rocky areas

   This plant is in the same family as dandelions, goldenrods and asters. What look like 5 yellow petals are actually 5 distinct flowers known as “ray flowers.” The yellow center contains a cluster of tiny “disc flowers,” each with 5 very tiny petals.

   Green and Gold is uncommon in the wild in Maryland, but it is widely sold in garden centers and it makes an attractive spreading ground cover.

   This plant is also known as Golden Star.

YELLOW 6 PETALS

1. Trout Lily - *Erythronium americanum*
   Native to Maryland

   **Height:** 3-8 inches

   **Flower:** 3 yellow petals and 3 yellow sepals; nodding down
Leaf: Smooth, thick, and mottled, growing directly from the ground

Habitat: Woods

Look around, and you will notice many single Trout Lily leaves with no flowers. A plant requires 2 leaves to produce enough energy to support a flower. Only a small fraction of the plants in a colony will bloom each spring. They rely more on vegetative reproduction, spreading underground. All the plants in this colony are likely to be clones of one original plant.

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YELLOW  7 OR MORE PETALS

1. Lesser Celandine - *Ranunculus ficaria*
   Native to Asia

Height: 3–8 inches

Flower: Bright yellow; 7 or more petals

Leaf: Roundish; low to the ground

Habitat: Everywhere, but especially pernicious on stream banks and floodplains

This alien plant is one of the most destructive to our natural habitats. It forms thick carpets that literally stretch for...
miles, obliterating all other non-woody plants. You can see this along the banks of the Jones Falls and the Patapsco River, where monocultures of Lesser Celandine dominate the stream banks.

The common name is misleading. This plant is in the buttercup family. It is not related to celandine, which is in the poppy family.

2. **Golden Ragwort - *Packera aurea***  
Native to Maryland

**Height**: 8-32 inches

**Flower**: Bright yellow and daisy-like

**Leaf**: Fern-like stem leaves; roundish lower leaves

**Habitat**: Moist woods and floodplains

Golden Ragwort is related to daisies and dandelions. What look like petals are actually distinct flowers known as “ray flowers.” The center contains a cluster of tiny “disc flowers,” each with its own tiny petals.

Golden Ragwort is sold in garden centers. It makes a versatile garden plant since it tolerates shade and sun and spreads rapidly.

This plant was formerly called “*Senecio aurea*.”
1. **Pale Corydalis - *Corydalis flavula***  
   Native to Maryland

**Height:** 2-4 inches

**Flower:** Small, yellow, and irregularly shape

**Leaf:** Delicate and feathery.

**Habitat:** Woods

Corydalis is closely related to Dutchman’s Breeches (listed in the White Section above). The leaves look almost identical. The Corydalis flower has only one spur, whereas Dutchman’s Breeches has two.

Corydalis is common in Maryland woods.
1. Jack-in-the-Pulpit - *Arisaema triphyllum*
   Native to Maryland

**Height:** 8-25 inches

**Flower:** Located inside a striped leafy structure called the “spathe.” Look under the hood to see the little cylindrical “Jack,” otherwise known as the “spadix.” On the spadix are many tiny individual flowers that later form bright red berries.

**Leaf:** 3 pointed leaflets on a stem arising from the base

**Habitat:** Woods

Jack-in-the-Pulpit is in the *Arum* family, like many houseplants from the tropics such as *Anthurium* and peace lily. These plants are either male or female, and can change their sex from one year to the next.

Jack-in-the-Pulpit is also known as Indian turnip. The roots are edible, but they must be prepared correctly or they will burn your mouth and throat.
1. **Wild Ginger - *Asarum canadense***  
   Native to Maryland

   **Height:** 3-6 inches

   **Flower:** Hidden beneath the leaves near the ground; brownish purple with 3 pointed petals forming a cup in the center

   **Leaf:** Broadly heart-shaped and fuzzy with stems all arising from the base

   **Habitat:** Woods

   Wild ginger is not related to the tropical spice also called ginger, but the root has a similar taste, and it was used as flavoring through the 1800s.

   Wild ginger blooms early in the spring and the flower persists until early summer. The foliage lasts until frost. It is sold in garden centers.

2. **Toad Trillium**  
   *Trillium sessile*  
   Native to Maryland

   **Height:** 4-10 inches

   **Flower:** Reddish purple (or greenish yellow); in the center of a group of 3 leaves

   **Leaf:** 3 wide mottled leaves with pointed tips at the top of a single stem
Habitat: Woods

The name Trillium refers to the number three, and this plant has three leaves, three sepals (that look like large petals), and three petals.

PINK/RED

1. Spring Beauty - *Claytonia virginica*
   Native to Maryland

Height: 2-8 inches

Flower: White to various shades of pink; 5 identical petals

Leaf: Grass-like

Habitat: Woods

Look closely at the flower and notice the thin pink stripes on the petals. These stripes are like “landing strips,” guiding insects to the center where the pollen is.

This is probably the most common spring wildflower in the northeast. It reproduces vegetatively, creating large colonies that blanket the forest floor. You can see Spring Beauty in bloom from February into late May.
1. **Wild Blue Phlox - *Phlox divaricata***  
Native to Maryland

**Height:** 6-12 inches  
**Flower:** Blue in varying shades; 5 petals and tubular at the base  
**Leaf:** Smooth edged, growing opposite each other on the stem  
**Habitat:** Woods

Take a close look at this flower. The petals are fused at the base, forming a tube that insects can reach into for pollen and nectar.

This flower is easy to recognize for anyone who has grown phlox in the garden, although most garden phlox is pink or white, blooms later and is much taller.

Wild Blue Phlox is sold at many garden centers. It makes a good spring bloomer for a shady garden. The foliage is thin, and may die back in the summer heat.

2. **Virginia Bluebells - *Mertensia virginica***  
Native to Maryland

**Height:** to 24 inches  
**Flower:** Large, showy clusters; blue when fully open, pink in bud; 5 petals fused at the bottom in a bell-shape
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Leaf: Big, floppy and thin; smooth edged; alternate growth pattern

Habitat: Woods, especially along streams and riverbanks, often in floodplains

Wildflower enthusiasts flock to the banks of the Potomac, the Patapsco, and other rivers to see thousands of Virginia Bluebells on display every spring. They die back soon after the flowers go to seed, with no trace left by summer.

Bumble-bees are the main pollinators of these and many other early spring wildflowers. Bumble-bees are our only native social bee. (Honey bees are native to Europe and Africa.)

Virginia Bluebells are sold in garden centers and will thrive in moist soil in shade to light sun.

3. Virginia Waterleaf - *Hydrophyllum virginianum*
   Native to Maryland

Height: 12-24 inches

Flower: Pale lavender to white, bell-shaped; 5 petals in clusters with protruding stamens

Leaf: Divided into 5-7 lobes; often mottled as if stained with water spots

Habitat: Damp woods and stream banks
Waterleaves bloom a little later than other spring flowers. Their large, mottled leaves make them easy to spot even when they are not blooming. Waterleaves spread by underground rhizomes, and thus are usually found in dense colonies. They are pollinated by bumblebees and other long-tongued bees.

Virginia Waterleaf is common in the wild in Maryland. Its showy flowers and persistent foliage also make it an attractive choice for a damp shady garden.

Other species of Waterleaf may also be found at Cylburn.

4. **Greek Valerian - *Polemonium reptans***  
Native to Maryland

**Height:** 8-20 inches

**Flower:** Pale blue; bell-shaped with 5 petals; in loose clusters

**Leaf:** Compound, with 9-15 smooth edged leaflets arranged opposite one another

**Habitat:** Open woods

Greek Valerian is also known as Creeping Jacob’s Ladder. Its leaves, with their horizontal leaflets, do resemble tiny ladders. This plant is rarely seen in the wild in the Baltimore area. It is more common in the mountains.

This and other related species are often used as garden plants. Their leafy, sprawling foliage remains attractive well after the flowers have disappeared.
5. **Wild Geranium - *Geranium maculatum***  
   Native to Maryland

**Height:** 8-18 inches

**Flower:** Blue; 5 regular petals

**Leaf:** Deeply lobed and toothed

**Habitat:** Woods

This common wildflower is a true geranium. Most of the so-called “geraniums” that are sold in garden centers and supermarkets are actually in the genus *Pelargonium*, and they were originally imported from South America.

The seed pod of this flower is shaped like the bill of a crane. When the pod snaps open, it throws the seeds up to 30 feet away.

Wild geranium is available in garden centers. It is an attractive, easy-going garden plant that will thrive and spread in light shade.
BLUE IRREGULAR PETALS

1. Common Blue Violet - *Viola sororia*
   Native to Maryland

**Height:** 1-4 inches

**Flower:** Violet or blue/violet with a whitish or yellow center; irregular shape, typical of violets

**Leaf:** Heart-shaped and slightly toothed; all leaves emerging from the base of the plant

**Habitat:** Woods and open spaces

This is our most common violet. It pops up everywhere, a welcome sign of spring in woods, fields, roadsides, gardens and lawns. Some people consider it a weed, but most simply relax and enjoy its charming, undisciplined personality. Like other violets, this one has two kinds of flowers. In addition to the obvious ones, there are also small inconspicuous flowers, often close to the ground. These other flowers do not “open.” They produce seeds by self-pollination.