

Mountain Wildflowers

57 common species in the Cascades and Olympics

How many times have you been out on a trail and thought, "Wow, what is that flower?" Washington's mountains offer a rainbow of wildflowers, from shady forest floors to the highest alpine meadows. *Washington Trails* is proud to present this handy field guide to wildflowers commonly seen on the trail. You won't find every wildflower here, but a good sampling to get you more familiar with everything from avalanche lilies to yarrow. This full-color insert was made possible by a grant from the Stusser Endowment for Hiker News and Reports, and by a dedicated group of wildflower enthusiasts and photographers. So, take these pages on your next hike and start learning the amazing world of mountain wildflowers!



NANCY HIGGINS

GLACIER LILY *Erythronium grandiflorum* Distinguished from avalanche lilies by their yellow flowers, glacier lilies are one of the first flowers to emerge from melting snows. They're found abundantly from middle elevation forests to alpine meadows above timberline.



RON SHOLAND

TIGER LILY *Lilium columbianum* It's hard to miss the distinctive orange blossoms and deep red or purple "freckles" on the tiger lily. The plants can be up to 3 feet tall and are found in meadows, open forests and clearings from lowlands to subalpine elevations.



CINDY CLARK

SKUNK CABBAGE *Lysichiton americanum* There's no mistaking skunk cabbage: a large, hooded yellow "flower" around a knobby yellow-green spike. There's also no confusing the odor of skunk cabbage, a funky smell that attracts flies and other pollinators. Found in swamps, seeps and wet areas to middle elevations.



PAM ROY

ALPINE YELLOW MONKEY-FLOWER *Mimulus tilingii* Dwarf creeping plant growing as small mat. Flowers about 1-inch long on single stems. Unequal, deeply divided lobes have throats spotted with red. Grows in moist seeps and wet meadows at middle to high elevations in mountains.

Basic Guide to Flower Anatomy

STAMEN

The male organ of a flower, composed of the anther and filament.

FILAMENT

Fine, hair-like stalk that supports the anther.

ANTHER

Upper-most, pollen-bearing portion of the stamen.

PISTIL

The female reproductive organ of a flower, composed of the ovary, style and stigma.

OVARY

Found the base of the pistil, the ovary is the seed-producing part of the flower.

STYLE

The stalk above the ovary.

STIGMA

The sticky center of a flower, this is the pollen receptacle found at the top of the pistil.

PETAL

The modified leaves of a flower, which are often brightly colored to attract pollinators.

SEPAL

Leaves, often green, found at the base and outer portions of the flower.

IMPERFECT FLOWER

Flowers in which male and female organs are found separately.

PERFECT FLOWER

Flowers containing both male and female organs (stamen and pistil).



Great Wildflower Hikes

HOH RIVER TRAIL

In this fabulous old-growth rainforest, you'll find shade-loving understory flowers, including vanilla-leaf, false lily-of-the-valley, foamflower and trillium. Best flowers: May–August.

UMTANUM RIDGE

On this renowned desert hike, the wildflower bonanza peaks in May. Arrowleaf balsamroot, shootingstars and the rare, flowering hedgehog cactus are to be found.

ESMERELDA BASIN

A wonderland of wildflowers (and one of the most diverse selections you'll find on any one hike) will treat you to elephant's head, Columbia lewisia, scarlet gilia and much more. Loops here can range from 4.5 miles to 15 miles. Peak flowers are from June to August.

SCORPION MOUNTAIN/ JOHNSON RIDGE

This trail in the new Wild Sky Wilderness area has phenomenal views of surrounding peaks, but be sure to turn your head downward to meadows filled with lupine, paintbrush, penstemon, aster, harebells and more. Visit June through August.



BEN LEGLER

EVERGREEN VIOLET *Viola sempervirens*

This member of the violet family inhabits low to middle elevation environments. It can be distinguished from other violets that live in the same areas by its runners, which form mats.



NANCY HIGGINS

ARROWLEAF BALSAMROOT *Balsamorhiza sagittata*

These bright yellow, very common "sunflowers" adorn the dry slopes on the east side of our mountains and steppes. The bottom leaves are fuzzy on both sides and shaped like arrowheads.



BEN LEGLER

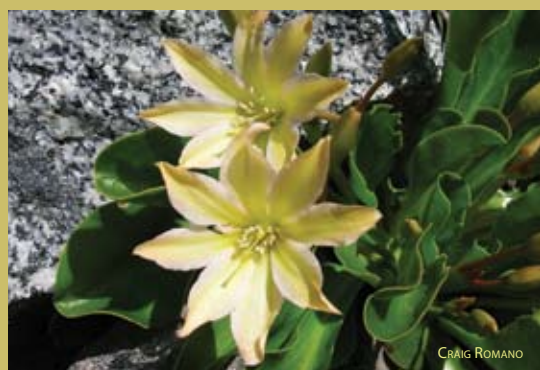
ORANGE AGOSERIS *Agoseris aurantiaca*

There are only a few flowers with orange petals, and this is the most common one. Both the flower and the seed head are reminiscent of a dandelion. It is seen in sunny locations from middle to high elevations.



CARL CLARK

ALPINE CINQUEFOIL *Potentilla villosa* The most rugged conditions can produce the most delicate-looking plants. This native perennial blooms in rocky areas in high mountain elevations from July until September.



CRAIG ROMANO

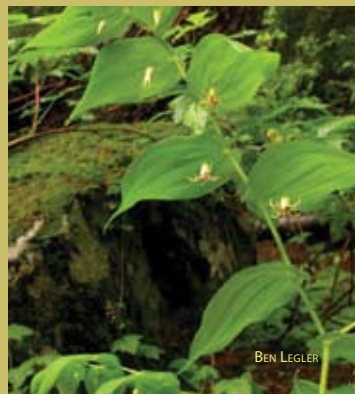
COLUMBIA LEWISIA *Lewisia columbiana* The petals of this plant vary in number and are usually white with pink stripes. The worse the soil, the better this plant likes it. It can be seen on rocky and gravelly areas from low to high elevations.



CINDY CLARK

FAIRYSLIPPER (CALYPSO ORCHID) *Calypso bulbosa*

Calypso orchid is an early-blooming flower seen in lowland forests and midmontane habitats. Please do not disturb it, but if you bend down to sniff it, you will find a very pleasant scent.



BEN LEGLER

TWISTED-STALK *Streptopus lanceolatus*

This member of the lily family can be distinguished from its close relatives by its faintly pink bell-shaped flowers. It is found from low to subalpine elevations.



RON SHOLAND

RED COLUMBINE *Aquilegia formosa*

Commonly found in moist, open meadows or partly shady sites, this flower is crowned by five points. The red blossoms with yellow tips and stamens nod downward. You'll find this wildflower, which reaches 3 feet high, from lower elevations to alpine meadows.



FIREWEED *Epilobium angustifolium*
This tall plant has red-pink, four-petaled flowers and fluffy seeds that are spread by the wind. This plant likes the sun and is often seen in clearings following forest fires.



MOSS CAMPION *Silene acaulis* Found in alpine areas and forming a bright red mat, the individual flowers have five petals. The base of the plant is woody, and the small, sharply pointed leaves are evergreen.



PINK WINTERGREEN *Pyrola asarifolia*
This common flower of the woods has rounded, dark green leaves at the base of the plant. The flowers are multiple, pink, and composed of five petals joined in a short bell. A prominent curved style sticks out of the flower.



PACIFIC BLEEDING HEART *Dicentra formosa* This is an early-blooming spring flower of low to middle elevations. Pink is the only color for the native bleeding heart. It is a plant found in shade.



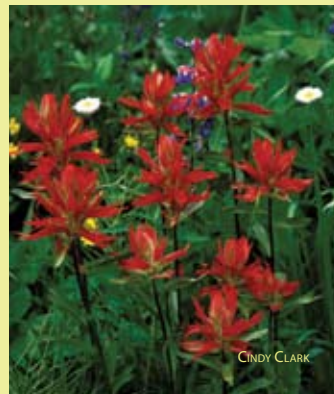
PURPLE MOUNTAIN SAXIFRAGE *Saxifraga oppositifolia*
This bright purple cushion-forming plant is seen in alpine areas in Washington but is rare. The flowers are single at the end of each stem. The stems' leaves are opposite.



JEFFREY'S SHOOTINGSTAR *Dodecatheon jeffreyi* The "inside-out" flowers of shootingstar are a vibrant pink or magenta. You'll find masses of these enchanting wildflowers in wet places ranging from high meadows to treeline.



SKYROCKET (SCARLET GILIA) *Gilia aggregata* This bright red, funnel-shaped flower with five sharply pointed lobes is seen in open areas on the east side of the Cascades at low to high elevations. The flower tube often has white dots.



COMMON PAINTBRUSH *Castilleja miniata* One of nature's most vivid reds, the scarlet Indian paintbrush is a native perennial that blooms from May to September in mountain meadows and coastal bluffs.

Great Wildflower Hikes

JUNIPER RIDGE

On the dividing line between the eastern and western crest, this 8-mile round trip takes you into the heart of Dark Divide country in the Gifford Pinchot National Forest. In addition to savoring the views on this high ridge, look down near your feet for paintbrush, lupines, penstemons and mariposa lilies among others.

MARMOT PASS

While exploring one of the most fantastic hikes in the Olympics, be sure to scout the high meadows here for harebells, tiger lilies, phlox, fireweed, agoseris and yarrow. Hike late June through August.

NACHES PEAK LOOP

This high loop near Chinook Pass offer gardens of western pasqueflower, monkeyflowers, bistort, lupine and many others. Hike it (clockwise for best views of Mount Rainier) from July through August.

PCT, SLATE PEAK TO WINDY PASS

Look for meadows bursting with wildflowers on this high stretch of the Pacific Crest Trail not far south of the Canadian border. The hike makes a good overnight with little elevation gain and just 7 miles round trip. Visit July through August.



For More Info

There is a wealth of guidebooks, websites and tours to help you find and identify wildflowers in Washington's mountains. Here's a small sampling:

Books

BEST WILDFLOWER HIKES WASHINGTON

ART KRUCKEBERG, KAREN SYKES AND CRAIG ROMANO (MOUNTAINEERS, \$18.95, 2004)

A great hiking guide that tells you where and when to see the most vibrant wildflower displays. Field notes by Kruckeberg, the eminent Northwest plant authority, make this a must-have.

PLANTS OF THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST COAST

JIM POJAR AND ANDY MACKINNON (LONE PINE, \$24.95, 2004)

The "bible" of plant identification for the Western Cascades and Olympics. Not particularly strong for east-side plants, but still an invaluable resource for hikers.

WILDFLOWERS OF THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST

MARK TURNER AND PHYLLIS GUSTAFSON (TIMBER, \$27.95, 2006)

Absolutely gorgeous book with 1,200 photos and listings of almost any wildflower you might encounter in the Pacific Northwest.

CASCADE-OLYMPIC NATURAL HISTORY

DANIEL MATHEWS (RAVEN, \$24.00, 1999)

An all-in-one field guide with a respectable collection of wildflowers. This is the book to pack into the field.



RON SHOLAND

BITTERROOT *Lewisia rediviva* A showy flower with numerous rose to white petals, this plant grows on rock and gravel where few other plants can survive. It occurs from low to alpine elevations on the east side of Washington.



RON SHOLAND

DAVIDSON'S PENSTEMON *Penstemon davidsonii* Often adding a blaze of pink to high meadows and mountaintops in the Cascades and Olympics, you'll find this low-growing shrubby flower in rocky crevices and gravelly soils at middle to high elevations.



RON SHOLAND

SPREADING PHLOX *Phlox diffusa* Ranging in color from white to pink to blue, this native perennial grows in loose mats in open rocky areas. Widespread throughout Washington with a long blooming period from May through August, phlox is a welcome sight for hikers in middle to high elevations in the mountains.



ALAN BAUER

OREGON IRIS *Iris tenax* This west side forest plant resembles the common garden iris. The petals vary from violet to blue to white and there are one to two flowers per stalk.



DAVE SCHIEFELBEIN

TALL BLUEBELLS *Mertensia paniculata* These nodding blue (or even sometimes pink) flowers on plants 8 to 30 inches high are generally found in moist areas, open meadows and along streambanks. Found at all elevations in the Cascades and Olympics.



PAM ROY

LEWIS'S MONKEYFLOWER *Mimulus lewisii* These pink to red flowers can be found laughing along streambeds, moist meadows and in east and west side alpine and subalpine areas. Flowers 1-inch or longer are five lobed tubes held along single stems. Throat and lower petals are hairy.



ALAN BAUER

ELEPHANT'S HEAD *Pedicularis groenlandica* Middle to high elevation meadows, seeps and sides of mountain streams are common sites where elephant's head might be found. This perennial can grow to 16 inches. Basal leaves are fern-like and the pink-purple flowers are tightly packed on the stem and resemble the head and trunk of an elephant.



MOUNTAIN MONKSHOOD *Aconitum columbianum* Found in middle to subalpine elevations, this deep purple flower with its hooded appearance (hence the name) is generally found in high moist meadows and along streambanks in the Cascades.



MENZIE'S LARKSPUR *Delphinium menziesii* Having blue to purple flowers with a prominent rear spur, this larkspur is found in high meadows and seeps at low to middle elevations in the Cascades and Olympics.



DWARF MOUNTAIN LUPINE *Lupinus lyallii* Flowers are blue and clustered at the tip of a short stem sprouting from palmate, basal leaves. Basal leaves have between five and nine leaflets covered in silver hairs, which help reduce water loss and protect against the harsh conditions of the alpine tundra.



EXPLORER'S GENTIAN *Gentiana calycosa* This common late-blooming flower of wet mountain meadows is dark blue with yellow spots. The flower is held upright on the stem and has a bell shape. It opens when the sun is shining on it.



SILKY PHACELIA (SKYPILOT) *Phacelia sericea* This blue to purple flower forms a cluster of blooms at the tips of the stems. The stamens protrude from the flowers, giving a fuzzy appearance. The leaves are rather finely divided and covered with soft white hairs to protect the plants from the harsh weather.



SELFHEAL *Prunella vulgaris var. lanceolata* This low-growing member of the mint family is commonly seen in lawns and other disturbed areas. The purple flowers are in a head at the top of the plant. This is a native and is found all around the northern part of the world.



PIPER'S BELLFLOWER *Campanula piperi* This bellflower is found only in the Olympic Mountains. The five-petaled blue flower is widely open and is found in rocky alpine and subalpine habitats.



Websites

WASHINGTON NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY
www.wnps.org
 Includes a searchable index of many native wildflowers.

WASHINGTON HERBARIUM
www.washington.edu/burkuseum/collections/herbarium/index.php
 An extensive database of native plants and photos.

NORTHWEST NATIVE PLANTS COLORING BOOK
www.nps.gov/plants/color/northwest
 A cool collection of coloring book images of many native plants and wildflowers, produced by the National Parks Service.

EASTERN WASHINGTON WILDFLOWERS
www.bentler.us/eastern-washington/plants/wildflowers.aspx
 A nice collection of photos and links on wildflowers native to Eastern Washington.

Guided Hikes

NORTH CASCADES INSTITUTE
www.ncascades.org
 NCI leads an extensive series of outdoor educational programs, including a Northwest Naturalists Weekend.

WASHINGTON NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY
www.wnps.org
 WNPS guides a wide range of botanical outings throughout the year, including an intensive botany outing for endemic species of the Olympics.

Endemics

Endemics are species found only in one particular area, and nowhere else in the world. Washington is home to more than two dozen endemic species, and a number of these are wildflowers.

There are a variety of reasons why endemic plants evolved in their localized settings. One place to see rare endemics is on the Iron Peak and Longs Pass Trails in the Teanaway region in the central Cascades. Because this area has an unusual predominance of serpentine rocks, soils here are high in iron, magnesium and nickel (minerals not generally helpful to plant growth). To cope with these minerals, evolution has produced some unique plant species, including two wildflowers. Look for *Douglasia nivalis* var. *dentata* (reddish purple primrose) and *Castilleja elmeri* (showy yellow paintbrush) from July to late August.

The Olympic Mountains are also home to a number of endemic plant species, thanks to ice age glaciers, which separated "islands" of high country from the rest of the region. Evolution took its own course at places like Hurricane Ridge. Hike the Klahane Ridge and Obstruction Peak Trails in mid- to late July to look for *Synthyris pinnatifida* var. *lanuginosa* (Olympic mountain synthyris), *Senecio neowebsteri* (Olympic yellow daisy), *Campanula piperi* (piper's harebell), *Viola flettii* (Flett's violet) and *Astragalus australis* var. *olympicus* (Olympic milkvetch).

For more information, consult Olympic National Park's endemic website at www.nps.gov/archive/olym/invendemic.htm and the guidebook *Best Wildflower Hikes Washington* (MOUNTAINEERS, \$18.95, 2004).



SCOULER'S HAREBELL *Campanula scouleri* This harebell is a pale blue to white and occurs at low elevations in west side forests. It has characteristic lance-shaped to rounded, toothed leaves.



ALPINE ASTER *Aster alpigenus* Found at high elevations (from subalpine to alpine), these daisy-like flowers range in color from lavender to violet and have a yellow disk at the center. The plants are 2 to 6 inches high.



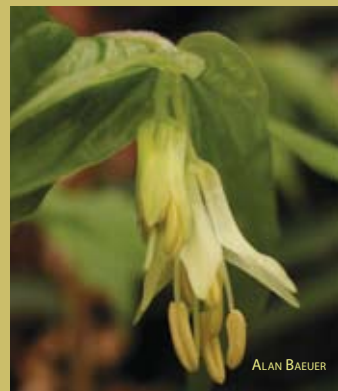
QUEEN'S CUP *Clintonia uniflora* Simple, six-petaled white flowers are found on plants with elliptical leaves 3 to 6 inches long. Generally found in moist forests or clearings from low to subalpine elevations.



COMMON CAMAS *Camassia quamash* This perennial blooms from a bulb and is found in low to middle elevations, grassy slopes and meadows with well-drained soil. The terminal spike can reach up to 24 inches tall and contain at least 5 separate pale-blue to purple flowers.



FALSE SOLOMON'S SEAL *Smilacina racemosa* There's nothing false about this broad-leaved perennial found abundantly in shady forests, meadows and along streambanks from low to subalpine elevations. Flowers are tiny, fragrant and creamy white, and found in dense clusters.



HOOKER'S FAIRYBELL *Disporum hookeri* The bell-shaped flowers of this lily are composed of six petals joined together, and they are usually arranged in pairs. This flower can be easily identified by its anthers extending out of the flower.



AVALANCHE LILY *Erythronium oregonum* To distinguish this lily from the glacier lily, look for a white flower with yellow center. Both lilies produce heat to melt the remaining inches of snow so they can bloom. Found from the subalpine zone to timberline, avalanche lilies are common in the Olympics and from Mount Rainier to Mount Hood.



FALSE LILY OF THE VALLEY *Maianthemum dilatatum* Small fragrant flowers in terminal clusters above heart-shaped leaves. Berries start green mottled with brown, becoming bright red in autumn. Found in moist, shady woodland areas at low to middle elevations, sometimes forming a dense groundcover.



NANCY HIGGINS

WESTERN TRILLIUM *Trillium ovatum* A harbinger that spring has arrived in the Pacific Northwest, this elegant, three-petaled flower is one of the first to emerge after snows melt in shady forests. The plants can be up to 18 inches high and the large oval leaves come in clusters of three. Found in low to middle elevations.



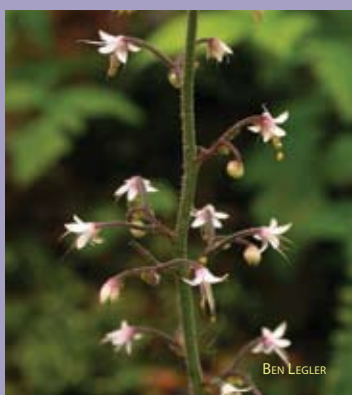
CINDY CLARK

BEARGRASS *Xerophyllum tenax* Beargrass thrives in understory forests as well as drier subalpine meadows from the Olympic Peninsula to the Cascades. Minute white fragrant flowers bloom on stalks up to 60 inches tall from clumps of basal leaves. The wiry leaves were woven into various baskets and hats by Northwest Indians.



CINDY CLARK

WESTERN PASQUEFLOWER *Anemone occidentalis* Here's one whose nondescript bloom may be overlooked, but you won't miss the next stage, which resembles a fuzzy mop of hair. An early bloomer, the seed pods last all summer on mountain slopes and meadows in middle to high elevations.



BEN LEGLER

FOAMFLOWER *Tiarella trifoliata* Tiny flowers in clusters at tips of thin stems stand above mounds of basal leaves. Grows to 6–15 inches tall. Foamflower inhabits moist, shady woods and stream edges below 4,000 feet elevation.



ROB SHOLAND

VANILLALEAF *Achlys triphylla* Abundant in shady forests at low to middle elevations, the distinctive fan-shaped leaves of this plant often carpet large areas of the forest floor. Clusters of small white flowers are found on a prominent spike 1 to 2 inches long.



RICHARD T. RAMSDEN

MOUNTAIN LADYSLIPPER *Cypripedium montanum* Rich humus soil and dry climate open forests of the eastside Cascades provide the excellent growing conditions for this rare orchid. The fragrant white flower resembles a slipper and the three sepals are copper-colored and corkscrew-shaped with two per stem reaching heights of 24 inches. Admire this beauty but don't pick. These orchids can take up to 15 years to bloom.



ROB LOHR

SIBERIAN MINER'S LETTUCE *Claytonia sibirica* Also known as Candyflower, this annual can be found in moist, shady forests at low to middle elevations. Basal leaves are lance to egg-shaped with long stems up to 16 inches. Flowers are white to pink. Siberian miner's lettuce is one of the few annuals that sprouts, blooms and dies within a single growing season.

Hike this!

CONRAD MEADOWS

Perhaps no one spot in Washington state is more fabled among wildflower-spotters than Conrad Meadows, in the Wenatchee-Okanogan National Forest. It was a favorite of guidebook author Harvey Manning, and on a field trip for the Washington Native Plant Society in June 1986, Arthur Kruckeberg and Jim Riley counted over 115 different wildflower species in the bogs and meadows here.

You can find Kruckeberg's checklist online at www.wnps.org/plant_lists/counties/yakima/conrad_mountains.doc.

The wildflower display runs from May to early July, and you can hike the relatively easy Tenday Creek Trail (3 miles round trip) or head further up along the South Fork Tieton River on the Headwaters Loop Trail (16 miles round trip).

The wealth of biodiversity here is a result of a variety of habitats in a small area. You've got open woods, wetland bogs, moist meadows, and sandy, well-drained border areas. You'll likely find camas, larkspur, monkeyflower, lupine, cinquefoil, and many more varieties.

To get to the trailhead, drive U.S. Highway 12 to South Fork Tieton Road. At 4.5 miles turn left on FS 1000, then drive 14 miles to a gate and the trailhead, elevation 3,900 feet. A Northwest Forest Pass is required, and remember that cattle are allowed to graze the lower meadows after mid-July.

Thank WTA's Stusser Endowment for Hiker News and Reports for donating this special insert.

This field guide to mountain wildflowers was created by the Washington Trails Association and WTA's Stusser Endowment for Hiker News and Reports. The Stusser Endowment was created to help support special projects in WTA's magazine and on its web site. For more information how you can donate to the endowment, please visit www.wta.org.

Washington Trails Association is the voice for hikers in Washington state. We protect hiking trails and wildlands, take volunteers out to maintain trails and promote hiking as a fun, healthy way to explore the outdoors. For more information on WTA efforts to protect our trails, please visit www.wta.org.

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SITKA VALERIAN *Valeriana sitchensis* Sweetly scented white to pale pink flowers in dome-shaped clusters atop squarish stems. Stamens extend past clusters giving fuzzy look. Found in vernal moist meadows and open rocky slopes at middle to alpine elevations. Reaches up to 3 feet tall and has opposite leaves.



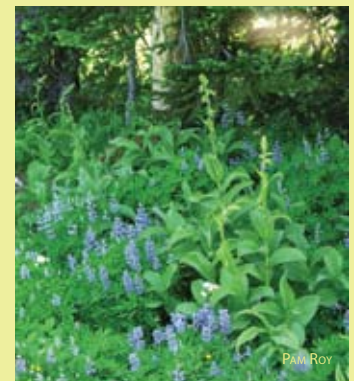
YARROW *Achillea millefolium* A common, sometimes weedy native plant found from low to high elevations. Leaves are fern-like and the flowers are white to pink or red in clusters of up to thirty.



BUNCHBERRY *Cornus canadensis* The perfect white flowers of bunchberry are nicely set off by the perfectly ribbed leaves. Flowering from June to August, it enjoys moist forests.



SUBALPINE MARIPOSA LILY *Calochortus subaplinus* Uncommon in our state, the mariposa lily is found in forests and dry meadows from middle to subalpine elevations. Its graceful, three-petaled flowers are yellow-white and sometimes tinged lavender. Generally only found in the southern Cascades of Washington at middle to high elevations.



FALSE HELLEBORE, CORN LILY *Veratrum viride* Found in abundance in subalpine meadows, corn lilies are found in wet seeps, bogs and places where snow-melt accumulates. Plants grow from 3 to 6 feet high, and the clusters of small star-shaped flowers range from white to pale green. The plant is poisonous.



AMERICAN BISTORT *Polygonum bistortoides* Bistort's white puffs accentuate the colors of surrounding flowers. Blooms from May to August in moist meadows to alpine slopes, at middle to high elevations.



CHOCOLATE LILY *Fritillaria lanceolata* This perennial herb grows up to 30 inches tall from a bulb resembling garlic cloves. The bell-shaped flowers are a deep purple color with greenish mottling. Hanging upside-down, flowers can be solitary or two to five per stem. Found in meadows, grassy areas and open forests where the soil is moist.



WILD GINGER *Asarum caudatum* Found in the rich, moist soils of low to middle elevation forests, wild ginger can be identified by its shiny, heart-shaped leaves and solitary purplish-brown flower with long twisting lobes tapering to a point. Look carefully for this one, as its flower is often obscured by the forest duff.