

Wildflower Alert

Back Yard Wisdom - April 2017, reprise of May 2013

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Wildflower Alert 2017

Wildflower Alert -
An invitation to join
the party!

There is a wild dance being held in the woods. It is held every year in early May and most people miss it completely. The invitations go out in early April when the soil warms enough for microbes to begin breaking down leaf litter, releasing nitrogen essential to plant growth. The normal spring rains would wash the nitrogen away if there were no plants to capture and use it. But, thankfully, nothing is wasted in the forest.



Trillium in Daniel Wright Woods, Mettawa, IL

photo by: Lesley Bruce Smith

The forest floor is covered with native Illinois wildflowers like Bloodroot, Hepatica, White Trillium, Bellwort, Toothwort, Anemone, Jacob's Ladder, Waterleaf, Wake Robin, Trout Lilly, May Apple, Wild Geranium, Wild Ginger, Solomon's Seal, False Solomon's Seal, and Buttercup. In order to capitalize on the nitrogen and sun light energy, they need to act fast.

Meanwhile high above the forest floor, in the canopy, the trees are in flower too. To capitalize on spring winds, on which they depend to spread their flower pollen, there is also a desperate race to release their pollen before the leaves come out, because the leaves impede the wind that spreads their pollen.

The wildflowers that hug the forest floor are insect pollinated, some smell sweet to attract native bees and little wasps while others, like the Wild Ginger, are deep red, smell like garbage and are pollinated by maggots. However, what they all must have is sun light. It takes a great deal of the sun's energy to produce leaves, flowers and fruit. By mid May the tree canopy is filled with leaves shading out 98% of the sun's life

giving energy. The wildflowers have to live their lives fast! They shoot out their leaves, produce beautiful flowers, are pollinated, produce fruit, store energy and die down for next years wild party, and all of this has to happen in 2 to 3 weeks.

That is why most of us miss it. Here are a few pictures, but if you don't delay you can **SEE ILLINOIS' BEST FLOWER SHOW FOR FREE RIGHT NOW!** Lake County Forest Preserves are wonderful. My favorite is **Daniel Wright Forest Preserve** in Mettawa off Everett Road and Saint Mary's Road just west of Lake Forest.

•Gilbert and Lesley will be there on ***Saturday May 6TH at 3:00PM next to the parking lot*** to lead a one hour wildflower walk. Bring your friends and join us for the wild dance.



Native Bloodroot

photo by: Lesley Bruce Smith

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