

BWSR Featured Plant

Statewide Wetland
Indicator Status:

- FACU

Name: Bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*)

Plant Family: Poppy (*Papaveraceae*)



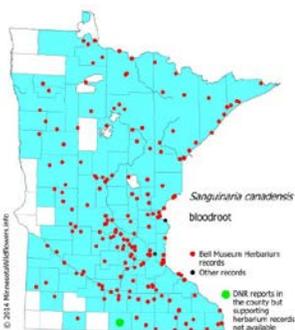
Bee on bloodroot flower
Photo Amy Workman

Emerging as early as March from last fall's bed of leaves, bloodroot is one of the first signs of spring across Minnesota. Named for the red sap in its roots, it was once used as a dye by Native American artists and in the natural dying of yarn and fabrics. Roots and rhizomes are toxic to touch, so should be handled with gloves and no part of the plant should be ingested. A single flowering stem grows from the ground, encircled by a single 3-5" wide leaf. Typically found in wooded areas, flowers require some sun to bloom and must do so before towering trees sprout leaves and shade the forest floor. Once bloomed, leaves will unfurl and the fragrant flowers lasts only 1-2 days, closing at night – traits typical to the poppy family of plants. Leaves will persist throughout the growing season.

Identification

Leaves are basal only (growing from the root and not from stems). They are oval to round in outline with 5-9 major lobes and several minor lobes. The leaf is smooth with a radiating network of veins. The greyish-blue green leaves, with a whitish green underside, can grow from 3-12" tall and 3-5"

across. The white flowers grow from reddish to green flower stalks and measure 1 ½-3" across and typically have 8-12 petals and many dark yellow-tipped stamens. Double flowers sometimes occur.



Range

Bloodroot is native north to Nova Scotia and south to Florida, from eastern United States to the Great Plains region. It thrives in deciduous forests with dense shade, near floodplains, streams and seeps that supply moist soil.



Flower stalk and leaves

MN range of bloodroot
University of MN Bell Museum
Herbarium records, 2014.



Flowers in colony
Photo Amy Workman

Uses

Once used by Native Americans medicinally, it is now understood that the red sap of the rhizomes and foliage is toxic. For this reason, mammals avoid the plant. The sap was commonly used as a dye.

Ants seek out and distribute the fleshy seeds. Flowers do not produce nectar, but honeybees, native bees, bumblebees, hoverflies, and beetles use the pollen as a food source. Gardeners value the plant for its early blooms, attractive leaves throughout the season, and ability to grow in shaded areas under trees.

Primary Uses:

- Pollinator Habitat
- Ornamental flowering plant
- Natural dye

Planting Recommendations

Bloodroot thrives under thick deciduous trees that allow sunlight to reach the ground in early spring and then cast shade later in the spring and summer. Soils in planting locations should be moist and rich in organic matter. Seeds mature in mid to late spring and should be planted fresh and will sprout the following spring. Each fruit capsule contains 10-15 seeds. Plants can also be separated at the root or planted from containers. Plants will become dormant when soils dry out at the end of the season, so keep the ground moist to have leaves throughout the summer.

Planting Methods

- Seed
- Root division
- Containerized plants

Similar Species



Sharp-lobed Hepatica (*Hepatica acutiloba*)

Hepatica has similar flowers, but are typically smaller than bloodroot, 1-1 1/2" across. Stamens are white instead of yellow. Leaves with 3 egg-shaped lobes developing after the flowers bloom.



Rue Anemone (*Thalictrum thalictroides*)

4-8" in height, rue anemone shares white flowers and yellow stamens with bloodroot. However, its leaves are 1" long in groups of 3 with 3 shallow lobes at the tips. Flower color can be pinkish or white.



Photo MinnesotaWildflowers.com

Twinleaf (*Jeffersonia diphylla*)

A Special Concern species in Minnesota, twinleaf is found only in the southeast corner of the state. Appearing to be a pair of leaves, each leaf is cleft at the tip and base, generally smooth or very slightly lobed, and up to 4" long each.

References

<http://www.illinoiswildflowers.info>, <https://www.minnesotawildflowers.info>, <https://plants.usda.gov>, <https://www.wildflower.org/>, <https://www.gardeningknowhow.com>, <http://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org>

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