BOARD OF WATER AND SOIL RESOURCES

2024 December Featured Plant

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White turtlehead (*Chelone glabra*)

Family: Plantain (Plantaginaceae)

DESCRIPTION: A native perennial found in wetlands and shorelines in the eastern half of the state, white turtlehead's range extends northwest into Minnesota's forests and peatlands. It flowers from August through September. "Chelone," which comes from the Greek word for tortoise, alludes to flowers' distinctive shape.

USES: Because it can take effort to pry the flowers open, pollinators tend to be larger bee species, butterflies and hummingbirds. Worker bumblebees and **long-horned bees** (pictured) are common visitors. So are Baltimore checkerspot butterflies, whose larvae also use turtlehead as a host plant.

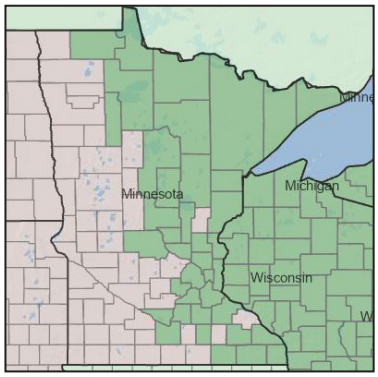
REFERENCES:

Minnesota Wildflowers

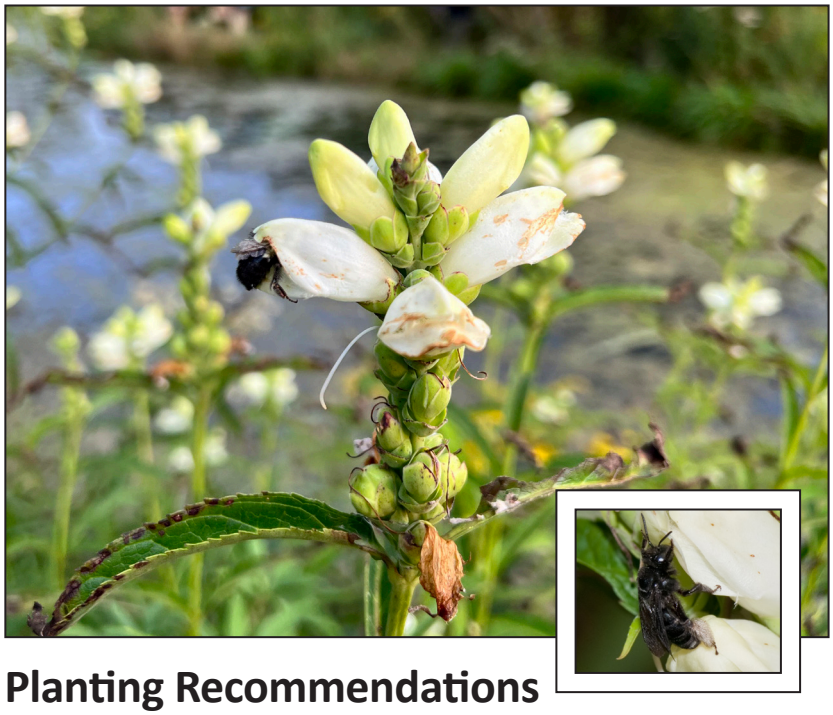
Minnesota Seasons

Pollinators of Native Plants: Attract, Observe and Identify Pollinators and Beneficial Insects With Native Plants; Heather Holm, Pollination Press LLC

Friends of the Wildflower Garden



Range Map Credit: USDA Plants Database



Planting Recommendations

White turtlehead does well in wetland, lakeshore and stormwater plantings with full sun. Avoid planting in sites that tend to dry out or where taller, more aggressive species are prevalent. Seed collection is best done in late fall after the oval-shaped seed capsules have dried and split open to reveal a cluster of flat, brown seeds. If artificially stratifying seeds, allow up to 90 days of cold-moist stratification before sowing. Give seedlings plenty of time to grow and develop a robust root system before planting outdoors in a sunny, wet location. Over time, turtlehead may form colonies via rhizomes, which can be carefully divided if excessive damage to the taproot is avoided.

Developed by Brett Stolpestad, Washington Conservation District landscape restoration specialist

Plant Photo Credit: Brett Stolpestad
Insect Photo Credit: Heather Holm

STATEWIDE WETLAND INDICATOR STATUS: OBL

ID: Tubular flowers grow up to 1 ½ inches long; the two-lobed upper lip is fused at the base with the three-lobed lower lip. Growing in spikes at the end of the main stem, flowers range from yellow or creamy white to a greenish-white, sometimes tinged with pink. Lance-shaped, sharply-toothed opposite leaves grow up to 8 inches long and 1 ½ inches wide. Leaves are stalkless or attached by short petioles to the hairless, four-sided stem.

SIMILAR SPECIES: Red turtlehead (*Chelone obliqua*) is also considered native to Minnesota, though its range and abundance are less well known. It has red or pink flowers.