

# Bishop's cap (*Mitella diphylla*)

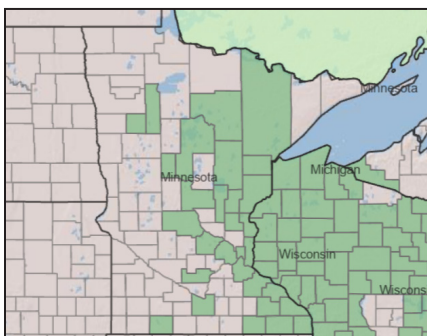
## Family: Saxifrage (Saxifragaceae)

**DESCRIPTION:** Bishop's cap is a delicate woodland perennial with snowflake-like, fringed white flowers on thin stems. This spring ephemeral blooms from late April to June in rich, moist forests and shaded gardens throughout Minnesota. Seed capsules resemble a bishop's miter. After pollination, seeds develop within the plant's curved, cup-shaped sepals. As they mature, the flower stalk becomes more upright, positioning the seeds so they can be dispersed by splashing raindrops.

**USES:** Bishop's cap can provide ground cover in wooded areas, and makes an attractive edging in shade gardens or under trees. Its flowers are pollinated by syrphid flies and small, short-tongued bees. Sweat bees are the most common bee visitors. **Small carpenter bees** (pictured) also visit the flower, as do ants, which may crawl up the flower stalks to feed on nectar.

### REFERENCES:

[Minnesota Wildflowers](#)  
[Minnesota Seasons](#)  
[Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center](#)  
[Illinois Wildflowers](#)



Range Map Credit: USDA Plants Database



## Planting Recommendations

Bishop's cap grows best in rich, moist soil in dappled sunlight or full shade, but tolerates dry, rocky ground. The plant is well-suited for shade gardens or woody understory restorations. Plants can be started from seed or by dividing roots or runners. Seeds can be collected from mature plants as soon as the seeds turn dark. To germinate, seeds need cold, moist stratification. When sown outdoors, seeds need more than one winter season to break dormancy. Alternatively, seeds can be stratified indoors

for up to 140 days under cold, moist conditions, and then kept in sunlight, indoors or outdoors, at 70 degrees or warmer to encourage germination. Seeds germinate fairly well when sowed at soil level. Plants typically start to bloom in the third year. Once established, plants spread through underground rhizomes, gradually forming dense patches. A light mulch helps to retain soil moisture around plantings. Good companion plants include wild geraniums, maidenhair ferns and Virginia bluebells.

**Developed by Larissa Fitzgerald**, a district technician at Pennington Soil and Water Conservation District, Lawns to Legumes coach, certified pollinator steward with the Pollinator Partnership, and pollinator ambassador with the University of Minnesota Extension



Photo Credits: Heather Holm

**STATEWIDE WETLAND INDICATOR STATUS:** GP, MW, NCNE: FACU

**ID:** Individual cup-shaped white flowers with five fringed petals grow on short stalks along slender flowering stems, or racemes, which emerge from the base of the plant. A pair of opposite, stalkless leaves sits midway up each flowering stem and may appear joined to it. Basal leaves are heart-shaped with long stalks. Stems and leaves' undersides are finely hairy. Plants grow up to 18 inches tall.

### SIMILAR SPECIES:

Small bishop's cap (*Mitella nuda*) has yellowish-green flowers, is much shorter and is almost always found in wetlands.