BOARD OF WATER AND SOIL RESOURCES

2026 December Featured Plant
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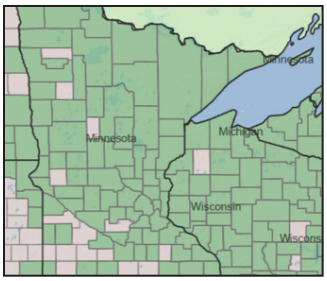
Jack-in-the-pulpit (*Arisaema triphyllum*)

Family: Arum (Araceae)

DESCRIPTION: Found in Minnesota's shaded deciduous woodlands and floodplain forests, Jack-in-the-pulpit is a native perennial that blooms from April to June. Its most distinguishing feature is a striped, hooded flower structure. Jack-in-the-pulpit can change sex from year to year depending on its stored energy reserves. Plants function as males, producing pollen, or females, producing berries. Because female reproduction requires more energy, plants with greater reserves are more likely to produce female flowers.

USES: Jack-in-the-pulpit is used in native gardens and restorations to support pollinators and to stabilize soils, particularly on shaded slopes. Its flowers are pollinated by small flies during the spring. While its berries are an attractive food source for birds and rodents, they are toxic to humans, causing severe mouth and throat pain if eaten.

REFERENCES:
Minnesota Wildflowers
USDA Forest Service
USDA NRCS



Range Map Credit: USDA Plants Database


Photo Credit: Dan Shaw, BWSR

Planting Recommendations

Jack-in-the-pulpit requires shade and thrives in moist, acidic soils with a high percentage of organic matter. This low-maintenance perennial is resistant to deer and rabbit browsing. Plants and seeds are available for sale at native plant nurseries. Seeds can be broadcast onto a prepared seedbed in fall or cold-moist stratified for 60 to 90 days before sowing. During the first growing season, seedlings develop a small underground storage structure known as a corm. Handle seedlings carefully when removing them from containers, as they do not develop a dense root system. Jack-in-the-pulpit pairs well with woodland natives such as Virginia waterleaf, false Solomon's seal, wild strawberry, blue cohosh and Pennsylvania sedge. Add spring color with ephemerals such as Dutchman's breeches, bloodroot, toothwort and bellwort.

Developed by Jude Lewil, an Increasing Diversity in Environmental Careers (IDEC) intern at BWSR in 2026 while a student at the University of Minnesota majoring in environmental science, policy and management and minoring in climatology



STATEWIDE WETLAND INDICATOR STATUS: GP, NCNE: FAC; MW: FACW

ID: A cuplike base and hood, which ranges from light green to purplish green, often with white or purplish vertical stripes, is the "pulpit." Inside a 2- to 3-inch-long club, ranging from light green to reddish green, is the "Jack." Leaves grow in one to two sets of compound leaves.

SIMILAR SPECIES: The leaves of Jack-in-the-pulpit are often mistaken for those of large-flowered trillium (*Trillium grandiflorum*). Jack-in-the-pulpit has a prominent central vein running from the base of the leaflet toward the tip and smaller veins branching from it. In contrast, large-flowered trillium has several primary veins radiating outward from a common point at the base of the leaf.