

### A Few Common Plants.

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The following notes are intended for young students and for some of the observers who fill out the phenological report-sheet furnished by the superintendent of education for Nova Scotia. A great many of the observers do not need any help, but there are others, who make no report at all on some common plants, or make such a report that it is evident they do not know plants as well as they might. These notes may not help them to tell what the plant is, but may help them to tell what it is not, and so prevent the making a wrong report. I have tried to avoid technical terms, using only the simplest language of botany. The dates I have given for the appearance of the plants are purposely put early so that one may begin to look for them in time:

*Blood-root.*—One has to be a prompt observer to see this plant in blossom, as it lasts but a few days. In the middle of April, or near the first of May, it may be seen as a white blossom growing near the edge of the woods. As a number of plants blossom at this time, the following will help distinguish the blood-root from the others: Flower—The blossom is white with a yellow centre. It consists of from eight to twelve petals with numerous stamens. There is but one pistil. In general shape the flower resembles a small poppy. If any calyx is found it will consist of two sepals. Leaves—The leaves are round, but divided into deep lobes. They are brown on top, and greenish-white underneath. The blossom rises above the leaves on a scape or stalk. Root—The roots are fibrous, springing from a thick fleshy underground stem or rootstock. (Many of our earliest spring plants, like this and the next two, grow from underground stems, not roots, as they are popularly supposed to be. These stems are storehouses of food which enable the plant to send up in a few days stalks bearing flowers and leaves). If the rootstock or even the leafy stem be squeezed it gives forth a juice that produces a red stain, which lasts for some time; hence the name of the plant.

*Adder's-tongue Lily.*—It hardly seems necessary to describe this plant, yet a number of reports make no mention of it. It is sometimes called the dog-tooth violet. It blossoms early in May, and should be found in damp places in the woods or in shaded meadows. Flower—The blossom is yellow, and grows on a scape or stalk six or eight inches long. It consists of six yellow sepals, which are often

marked with purple, and which spread out, and sometimes bend backward, like a tiger lily. There are six stamens and one pistil. Leaves—At the bottom of the scape, which bears the blossom, are two lance-shaped leaves of a pale green color, usually mottled with purple, or even white. Root—The roots are fibrous from a bulbous rootstock, and about as large as a small onion, which it resembles.

*Spring-beauty.*—This plant blossoms about the same time as the adder's-tongue lily. It is often found near brooks, and in moist places on the borders of woods. As the stem of this plant often reclines on the ground, it is not easily seen. Flower—The flowers grow in loose clusters, and are white with pink veins, or pink with almost red veining. The corolla consists of five petals, and the calyx of two sepals. There are five stamens and one pistil. Leaves—The leaves grow in pairs, oval and narrow, of a dark green color. Root—A tuber, buried as far in the earth as the height of the plant, resembling a tiny potato, with a few small fibres attached.

*Ground-ivy.*—It is difficult to describe this plant, but the following hints may help distinguish it from other plants. It is found in damp shady places, trailing on the ground or over rocks, and has a rapid growth. It is common about the middle of May. Flower—The flower is blue or purple, somewhat resembling the violet. It rises on a stem that starts from the axil of the leaf, or the point where the leaf joins the stalk. The blossom is divided into two parts or lips, one erect, the other spreading. The erect part is cleft in two, the spreading part in three pieces. The calyx is united, but five pointed. There are four stamens in two pairs, one pair shorter than the other, and one pistil, which is divided into two parts at its apex. Leaves—The leaves are small and kidney shaped, with a very pleasant odor.

*Clintonia.*—This plant is found in June in thickets where the ground is moist. There are usually three large leaves resembling those of a lily, above which, on a scape, are the greenish-yellow flowers. There are three or four blossoms on each scape. Each blossom has six sepals, six stamens that are quite long, and one pistil, that is also as long as the stamens. The fruit is a bluish berry.

*Marsh Calla.*—This plant is easily recognized. It resembles the calla lily, and is found growing in swamps during the latter part of June. The leaves are long-stemmed and heart-shaped. Rising on a scape, is the large white spathe, which is often called the flower. At the top of the scape, and resting