Colorful wildflowers blooming in Illinois’ woodlands are a delight to behold. Nearly every week throughout the spring and summer, an observer will be rewarded with glimpses of different species in flower. The 28 species illustrated on this poster were selected by John Wilker of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources’ Division of Natural Heritage to illustrate the variety of species that grow in Illinois’ woodlands and to encourage you to use some of these native species in your garden.

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Flowers growing in forested areas must be able to survive changing conditions. They adapt to these changes in several ways. Many woodland wildflowers complete their life cycle early in the spring. In this manner, they are able to take advantage of sunlight that will soon be blocked when leaves on canopy trees unfurl. They must quickly grow, flower, and produce seeds. Their seeds can survive until conditions for growth are favorable. Several species grow from underground structures that store food produced during the short growing season. Other wildflowers of woodland habitats are adapted to conditions of low light, blooming later in the year and for a longer period of time. Those wildflowers growing near the edge of woodlands have access to more light than interior woodland species.

**Conservation**

As of 2019, 184 species of plants are listed as endangered in Illinois and 74 are threatened in the state. While all of these species are different, for a given species the threats to all plant species are important.

The bald eagle, a forested marten, and the three-toed woodpecker are the three most endangered species in Illinois. Each species is threatened by habitat destruction or degradation. The bald eagle is a forested marten found throughout the state. The three-toed woodpecker is found in the north central part of the state. In addition to habitat destruction, each species is threatened by overharvesting, pollution, and climate change. The three-toed woodpecker is threatened by habitat destruction and climate change. The bald eagle is threatened by habitat destruction, pollution, and climate change.

**Key Terms**

- *Leaf Shape:*
  - Lanceolate
  - Oval
  - Ovate
  - Deltoid
  - Deltoid
  - Elliptic
  - Alate
  - Linear
  - Scapose
  - Erect
  - Lined
  - Cataphyll

- *Flower and Fruit Structures:*
  - Pedicel
  - Sepal
  - Petal
  - Calyx
  - Corolla
  - Androecium
  - Gynoecium
  - Ovary
  - Nutlet
  - Tubercle
  - Stolon
  - Rhizome
  - Follicle
  - Superior Ovary
  - Inferior Ovary

**Species Descriptions**

**Great waterleaf**

*Legrandia laciniata*

The great waterleaf is a large deciduous herb that grows to about two feet in height. It has a single leaf, with five to seven leaflets. Each leaflet is about two inches long and wide. The flowers are white, with four petals, and are arranged in clusters. The fruit is an ovoid, yellow berry that may be two inches long. The seeds can survive until conditions for growth are favorable. Several species grow from underground structures that store food produced during the short growing season. Other wildflowers of woodland habitats are adapted to conditions of low light, blooming later in the year and for a longer period of time. Those wildflowers growing near the edge of woodlands have access to more light than interior woodland species.

**Wild ginger**

*Asarum canadense*

The wild ginger is a perennial plant that grows in rich woods of the southern one-fourth of Illinois. The plants are usually found growing in clusters. The leaves are heart-shaped, hairy, about six inches long and on a hairy stalk. The single flower arises from the leaf axil. There are no petals. Three maroon sepals have the appearance of petals. The fruit is a dry, hard achene, with one seed. Each achene may be one-fourth inch in diameter, with three to six flat seeds. When seeds ripen, the dry, hard achenes pop open to disperse seeds. The threats to all plant species are important.

**Solomon’s-seal**

*Polygonatum multiflorum*

The solomon’s-seal is a perennial herb, growing to about two feet in height. It has a single leaf, with five to seven leaflets. Each leaflet is about two inches long and wide. The flowers are white, with four petals, and are arranged in clusters. The fruit is an ovoid, yellow berry that may be two inches long. The seeds can survive until conditions for growth are favorable. Several species grow from underground structures that store food produced during the short growing season. Other wildflowers of woodland habitats are adapted to conditions of low light, blooming later in the year and for a longer period of time. Those wildflowers growing near the edge of woodlands have access to more light than interior woodland species.

**Potter’s-wort**

*Sanguinaria canadensis*

The potter’s-wort is a perennial herb, growing to about two feet in height. It has a single leaf, with three to seven leaflets. Each leaflet is about two inches long and wide. The flowers are yellow, with four petals, and are arranged in clusters. The fruit is an ovoid, yellow berry that may be two inches long. The seeds can survive until conditions for growth are favorable. Several species grow from underground structures that store food produced during the short growing season. Other wildflowers of woodland habitats are adapted to conditions of low light, blooming later in the year and for a longer period of time. Those wildflowers growing near the edge of woodlands have access to more light than interior woodland species.

**Dutchman’s-breeches**

*Dicentra cuculi*

The dutchman’s-breeches is a perennial herb, growing to about two feet in height. It has a single leaf, with five to seven leaflets. Each leaflet is about two inches long and wide. The flowers are white, with four petals, and are arranged in clusters. The fruit is an ovoid, yellow berry that may be two inches long. The seeds can survive until conditions for growth are favorable. Several species grow from underground structures that store food produced during the short growing season. Other wildflowers of woodland habitats are adapted to conditions of low light, blooming later in the year and for a longer period of time. Those wildflowers growing near the edge of woodlands have access to more light than interior woodland species.

**Bluebells**

*Mertensia ciliata*

The bluebells is a perennial herb, growing to about two feet in height. It has a single leaf, with five to seven leaflets. Each leaflet is about two inches long and wide. The flowers are blue, with four petals, and are arranged in clusters. The fruit is an ovoid, yellow berry that may be two inches long. The seeds can survive until conditions for growth are favorable. Several species grow from underground structures that store food produced during the short growing season. Other wildflowers of woodland habitats are adapted to conditions of low light, blooming later in the year and for a longer period of time. Those wildflowers growing near the edge of woodlands have access to more light than interior woodland species.

**Spring beauty**

*Claytonia virginica*

The spring beauty is a perennial herb, growing to about two feet in height. It has a single leaf, with five to seven leaflets. Each leaflet is about two inches long and wide. The flowers are white, with four petals, and are arranged in clusters. The fruit is an ovoid, yellow berry that may be two inches long. The seeds can survive until conditions for growth are favorable. Several species grow from underground structures that store food produced during the short growing season. Other wildflowers of woodland habitats are adapted to conditions of low light, blooming later in the year and for a longer period of time. Those wildflowers growing near the edge of woodlands have access to more light than interior woodland species.