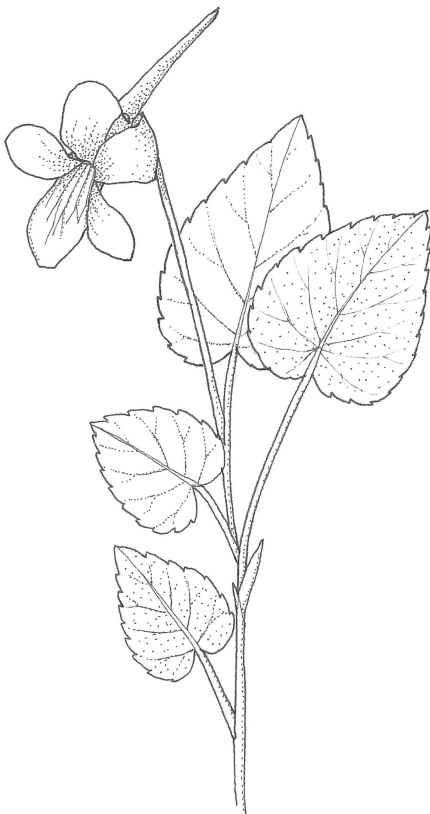




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FLORASCOPE

Occasional News from the Flora of Virginia Project



Long-spurred Violet

Special opportunity!

All of the botanical drawings in this email, and others, are now available for purchase. Signed original drawings of 14 of the 33 Virginia violets, [by noted Charlottesville botanical artist Lara Gastinger](#), can be purchased on a first-come, first-served basis for \$200 each.

Proceeds will benefit the Foundation of the Flora of Virginia Project and our work to Keep the Science Current.

Violets

'Like the sweet sound, That breathes upon a bank of violets.'

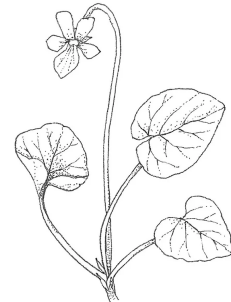
Twelfth Night



*Round-leaved
Yellow Violet*



Primrose-leaved Violet



Smooth White Violet

Spring in Virginia is welcomed each year by an infusion of color from violets. Some look forward to the emergence of these delicate beauties, others curse their aggressive spreading in lawns and plant beds.

[A Revised Phylogenic Classification for Viola \(Violaceae\)](#), published in the August 2022 issue of [Plants](#), presents the first taxonomic revision of Violaceae in nearly a century. This classification accepts 664 species vs. the 400 included the 1925 revision by Wilhelm Becker.

The impact of this revision is notable given the global and historical relevance of violets. They are native all over the world and in addition to their importance to native ecosystems have wondrous ethnobotanical uses as well.

The Flora App includes 33 taxa, 31 of which are native. A number of changes to descriptions as a result of the 2022 revision are updated in the App and are catalogued in this [VNPS article by Flora of Virginia founding member Marion Lobstein](#). Most notably, the Green Violet changed genus to *Cubelium* from *Hybanthus*.

Violets are critical to our Virginia ecosystems

The many species of violets which can be found across the Commonwealth are variable in color, ranging from deep purple to white and yellow, and have five petals, one with a spur. Natural hybridization has created variations that show a mix of colors as well. [This VNPS "Botanizing with Marion" article details what makes a violet a violet.](#)

- Many fritillary butterfly caterpillars are entirely dependent on violets for food.
- Native bees, most notably mining bees, also rely on violet nectar.
- A number of small mammals and birds feed on violet seeds, including mourning doves and bobwhites, wild turkeys eat the whole plant.
- Violets are a must for those working to convert fescue lawns and fields to native grass. In addition to the ecosystem benefits listed above, violets grow and spread quickly in a variety of conditions, are low-maintenance and deer-resistant.

Cleistogamy and myrmecochory?

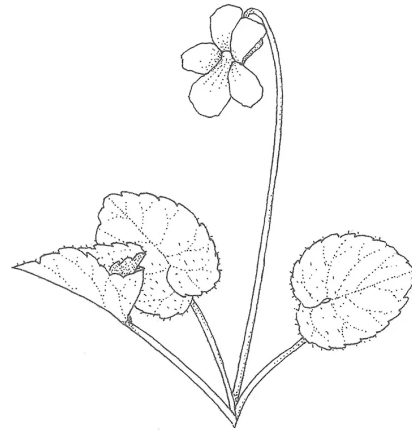
Huh?

These are ways violets reproduce in addition to pollination. [Cleistogamy](#) is a process of internal self-fertilization. When ready, the plant opens and shoots its seeds as far as two and half meters!

[Myrmecochory](#) is seed dispersal by ants. The seeds are coated with proteins that attract ants which gather the seeds to be consumed in their nests. They eat the delicious coating and discard the seeds, leaving them to germinate.



Halberd-leaved Yellow Violet



Southern Wood Violet

Ethnobotany of violets

The use of violets as food and medicine dates to the beginning of recorded history and extends across the globe. It is surmised that different uses of violets were shared between indigenous peoples and European settlers in North America. In addition to herbal remedies to treat coughs and other cold symptoms, violets make excellent cooling skin creams. Violets are edible and are often included in salads, and the petals can be candied or used to make jellies and jams. Violet oil has culinary uses and is the base of many perfumes.

Violets appear in folklore and carry special meaning in a number of cultures. In Greek mythology, Apollo's newborn son Ion was protected and nourished in a bed of violets, and Sappho's poetry is laced with violets and other purple flowers. The Iroquois believe violets are children of the earth and sky, symbolizing harmony and balance. The flower appears in multiple Shakespeare works, and the Victorians obsessed about violets:

"Victorians also used violets in food, mainly candies, cakes and pastries, and in everyday life, the flower was a constant visual presence. The flower featured in hatbands, buttonholes and lapels...Queen Victoria, whose favourite flower was the violet, helped to popularise the flower. In her journals, she mentions violets 105 times.[5]

(Mareike Doleschal 27 May 2021, [Shakespeare's Favourite Flowers: The Violet](#))

In France, the violet symbolized support for Napoleon during his periods of exile to Elba. His followers wore violets or violet-colored ribbons to signal alignment with Bonapartists.

Celebrate violets, and support the Flora of Virginia

While you consider opportunities to welcome violets, remember to check out the beautiful botanical drawings by Lara Call Gastinger.

Communication preferences

We are always looking for ways to be more efficient and economical in our fundraising. We are hearing that many prefer not to receive paper mailings and we respect that. With this in mind, we've added a Communication Preferences questionnaire to our website. Complete it now at the button below.

Questionnaire

Support the Flora of Virginia Project

The Flora of Virginia is evergreen, requiring ongoing attention to keep data up-to-date, add new features and functionality to the App and present new programs. We rely on the generosity of our users and donors to get our work done.



Buy the App



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