

SKIDMORE NORTH WOODS, Saratoga Springs, NY - Early May Nancy Slack

For a map to the trails see:

<https://academics.skidmore.edu/blogs/northwoods/files/2011/07/NorthWoodsTrailMapfinal.jpg>

To get to our trail, drive through Saratoga on Broadway, or approach via Northway exit 15 and Rt.50. Broadway turns into a dirt road (passable if not good). Go a very short way to a kiosk on the left, with a map and a moss roof. Park there or on the roadside. Continue on foot to a trail on the right (marked with a small yellow flag on the ground).

Down that trail you will see many limestone rocks covered with a lime-loving moss, nicknamed poodle moss because it looks like green poodle fur (*Anomodon attenuatus*). Around the rocks are native red and yellow **columbine** (below), in bud on May 4, but soon to flower.



Also there and in flower is the early meadow rue, which is dioecious (separate male and female plants, rather unusual among spring wildflowers), the males more conspicuous; the yellow anthers hang down.

Along the trail find **long-spurred violets**, some quite light and others deeper blue, all with a long spur containing nectar. (Note the spur). This is Ruth Brooks's photo. . Other photos are hers and from Jackie Donnelly's Saratoga Woods and Waterways blog, and some mine.



The next photo is **Canada violet** (below), one of my favorites and found in several places in Skidmore Woods. The petals are purple on the back, seen in the bud. Violets come in white and yellow, too, but were not blooming. Both these violets are only found in rich woods, often in soil with lime. Most violets have spurs. The lines seen here help pollinators find nectar in the spur. The green violet blooms later. It is rare, but is fairly common in Skidmore woods; a strange violet, but in New Zealand I saw violet trees!



Wild ginger was also found here. It has fuzzy heart-shaped leaves, and if you look at the flower way below on the stem, it is very symmetrical and looks as though designed on a spirograph (a children's toy). It is possible to make good ginger candy out of the root or rhizome, but don't pick it --just pull out the invasive **garlic mustard** (below).



Come back to the dirt road, and walk a little farther to a trail on the left with metal bars across it. Note the “green trail” sign. You will follow this trail to the blue trail and then the junction of the red trail. This trail goes a long way.-Try to get as far as the **white trillium** (below). After that, both leatherwood, a lime-loving shrub with (hanging yellow flowers) is right by the trail, and other rare plants are on the rocky hillside beyond.



You will see many more long-spurred violets at the beginning of the green trail and also conspicuous large-flowered **bellworts** (below), the flower hanging down, and the stem going through the leaf (perfoliate). It is a monocot, unlike the dicots (one, not 2 cotyledons), and in the lily family. Also in that family are Solomon's seal, with the individual flowers hanging beneath the stem and smooth leaves, in bloom now, and false Solomon's seal or Solomon's plume, with ribs on the leaves, just coming up. Solomon likely did have a seal; something looking like a seal is on the roots. White and red trillium are there also. red (purple) trillium on the left and a whole big patch of white on the right.



You will find the lovely miterwort and other flowers, but do also look at the ferns. The new Christmas ferns are coming up right next to the old ones, and Ruth found a grape fern, of an ancient fern family --no fiddleheads, just coming up. Rock ferns are coming out of the mossy rocks and in wet places new sensitive ferns with read stems, some still in fiddlehead guise, as are our larger wetland ferns.