



# Wildflowers

OF NOVA SCOTIA

—•••••  
*a pocket guide to common  
native flowers and shrubs*

**Blomidon Naturalists Society**

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This guide is dedicated to all those who work tirelessly to conserve our natural environment.

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Front cover photo: Rhodora (*Rhododendron canadense*), Ian Manning

Back cover photo: Mayflower (*Epigaea repens*), Peter Wallace



Monarch Butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*) on Common Milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*)

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## Acadian Forest Region



Nova Scotia is part of an ecoregion called the Acadian Forest Region (known as Forest Wapane’kati by the Mi’kmaq people). This is a temperate mixed forest of broadleaf (deciduous), and needle-bearing (coniferous) tree species.

The region spreads from southern Quebec into the maritime provinces of Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, and extends into the northern New England states. It is a globally unique meeting ground between the boreal forest to the north and the deciduous, mixed forests of the south.

The Acadian Forest is rich in biodiversity and comprises a wide range of habitats that support a variety of flora and fauna. It is a region classified as “at risk” by the World Wildlife Fund and in need of conservation and stewardship.

While Nova Scotia is part of the Acadian Forest Region, not all its plant species can be found naturally within the province. We are fortunate to have the Harriet Irving Botanical Gardens (HIBG), which contains a greater representation of the incredible variety of habitats found within the Acadian Forest Region. These gardens are open to the public and are well worth a visit (see page 88).

## Some terms explained



*While we have made every effort to avoid specialist botanical terminology, some words may need clarification. Meanings for the purposes of this guide:*

**Basal:** Occurring at or near the base of a plant, near ground level.

**Bog:** Open marshy area where soil is wet throughout the year.

**Boreal:** Climatic zone in the sub-Arctic, characterized by coniferous forests.

**Coniferous:** Dominantly evergreen, non-flowering trees bearing seed cones.

**Deciduous:** Plants such as trees or shrubs that lose their leaves in the fall.

**Floret:** A single flower of a head or cluster.

**Native:** Plant that developed naturally in an area, not introduced by humans.

**Phyllaries:** Reduced leaf-like structures that form one or more whorls immediately below a flower head.

**Rosette:** A circular arrangement of leaves.

**Sepals:** Part of a flower, usually green, typically functioning as petal support and protection of the bud before flowering.

**Shrub:** Seed-bearing plant with a woody stem (brown tabs in this guide).

**Stem:** The main axis or support of a plant.

**Stalk:** Support for a flower or fruit. In this guide, the terms 'stem' and 'stalk' have been used interchangeably.

**Stamen:** Pollen-producing organ of a flower.

**Whorl:** Leaf or petal cluster arranged in a spiral or circular pattern.

**Wildflower:** Flower that grows in the wild, without intentional seeding.

**Woods / woodlands:** Land covered with trees, commonly containing open areas where wildflowers and shrubs take advantage of higher light levels. Mixed woodland contains both deciduous and coniferous trees.



Pink Lady's Slipper (*Cypripedium acaule*)

## WHITE & GREENISH FLOWERS

### Pearly Everlasting *Anaphalis margaritacea*

Height: up to 80 cm    Flowers: August-October  
Habitat: disturbed ground, open barrens, woodlands



White papery flowers with distinct yellow centres. Grey-green lance shaped leaves.

### Howell's Pussytoes

*Antennaria howellii*

Height: 5-10 cm    Flowers: April-May  
Habitat: roadsides, open areas of woodland



Small basal rosette of leaves with woolly white undersides. Flowerheads on stem up to 10 cm high.

## WHITE & GREENISH FLOWERS

### Jack-in-the-pulpit *Arisaema triphyllum*

Height: up to 100 cm    Flowers: May to early July  
Habitat: damp woods and bogs



Large hooded flower, green and white striped on top, striped brown-purple and pale green or white spike or 'jack' inside. Leaves have three lobes.

### Round-leaved Sundew *Drosera rotundifolia*

Height: 5-25 cm    Flowers: June-August  
Habitat: bogs



Flower has five petals and is carried on a single spike. Carnivorous plant. Leaves form a basal rosette with red sticky hairs.



## WHITE & GREENISH FLOWERS

### Red Baneberry *Actaea rubra*

Height: up to 90 cm      Flowers: May-June  
Habitat: common in mixed and deciduous woodlands



Rounded white flower cluster, sharply toothed leaves. Red berries give it its name.

### White Turtlehead *Chelone glabra*

Height: 60-90 cm      Flowers: July-August  
Habitat: prefers wet to moist areas



White flowers in dense spike. Non-branching square stems. Upper two petals are fused forming a hooded structure, lower lip is three fused petals. Leaves are lance-shaped and finely toothed.

## WHITE & GREENISH FLOWERS

### Seabeach Sandwort *Honckenya peploides*

Height: up to 30 cm      Flowers: May-September  
Habitat: sandy or gravelly beaches



Small white flowers at tip of branches. Fleshy, opposite lance-shaped leaves. Plant trails along the ground.

### Blunt-leaved Sandwort *Moehringia lateriflora*

Height: up to 30 cm      Flowers: June-September  
Habitat: gravelly shores, open woodland

Five-petaled white flowers in loose clusters of one to five flowers growing from weak, finely hairy stalks, often branched. Leaves in opposite pairs, slightly oblong with blunt tips and smooth edges. Veins on underside of leaves are hairy.



## YELLOW & ORANGE FLOWERS

**GOLDENRODS** *There are over 100 species of Goldenrods, with around 20 being found in Nova Scotia! Many species are difficult to distinguish by the non-specialist. Some of the more common species are shown here. Habitat may provide clues.*

### Large-leaved Goldenrod

*Solidago macrophylla*

**Height:** up to 100 cm

**Flowers:** Aug-Sept

**Habitat:** shady ravines and woodlands

*Yellow flowers along a stout, single stem. Flowers face outward. Large, almost round, basal leaves become more lance-shaped as they progress up the stem. Tend to be smooth-edged.*



### Zigzag Goldenrod *Solidago flexicaulis*

**Height:** up to 100 cm

**Flowers:** July-September

**Habitat:** rich woodlands

*Flowers similar to Large-leaved Goldenrod. Stem zigzags. Leaves are more ovate and are toothed.*



## YELLOW & ORANGE FLOWERS

### Bog Goldenrod

*Solidago uliginosa*

**Height:** up to 100 cm

**Flowers:** July-September

**Habitat:** damp areas, peat bogs, wet meadows, woodlands

*Bright yellow flowers, densely packed on stem and short branches. Leaves can be roundish to long and narrow. Flower stems sometimes appear purple.*



### Early Goldenrod

*Solidago juncea*

**Height:** up to 100 cm

**Flowers:** June-September

**Habitat:** roadsides, open woods

*Yellow flowers on long, somewhat drooping branches. Long, lance-shaped leaves with fine hairs along the edges.*



## YELLOW & ORANGE FLOWERS

The next three Goldenrods are similar in appearance, height, and habitats. They are not easy to distinguish. Each have tall, flowering stems forming pyramidal or wand-like heads, can grow to a height of two metres, and grow in open areas, disturbed ground and roadsides, etc. The leaves can be used to differentiate the species.

### Canada Goldenrod

*Solidago canadensis*

**Height:** up to 1.5 m

**Flowers:** July-October

**Habitat:** clearings, woodland edge, roadsides

Narrow lance-like leaves, toothed and not as hairy as the other two. Two prominent leaf veins parallel to the midrib.



### Giant Goldenrod

*Solidago gigantea*

**Height:** up to 2 m

**Flowers:** Aug-Sept

**Habitat:** disturbed sites, old meadows

Looks like Canada Goldenrod; stems and leaves are smooth and have a whitish look to them. Flower heads may contain hundreds of florets.



### Rough-stemmed Goldenrod (NO PHOTO)

*Solidago rugosa*

Leaves are generally lance-shaped to ovate, with a single prominent vein and covered in hairs.

## YELLOW & ORANGE FLOWERS

### Seaside Goldenrod *Solidago sempervirens*

**Height:** up to 2 m

**Flowers:** August-September

**Habitat:** shorelines, coastal dunes, marshes



Bright yellow flowers held in dense pyramids. Clumping plant. Leaves are long, narrow, and hairless.



### Grass-leaved Goldenrod

*Euthamia graminifolia*

**Height:** up to 150 cm

**Flowers:** August-September

**Habitat:** disturbed areas, old meadows



Clusters of small yellow flowers at the top of plant and on upper branches. Leaves are smooth edged and linear with obvious veins.



## PINK & RED FLOWERS

### **Rose Pogonia** *Pogonia ophioglossoides*

**Height:** up to 30 cm    **Flowers:** July-August  
**Habitat:** bogs, wet meadows

Orchid with pink, usually solitary flower. Three sepals spread apart on top, two form a hood. Lip is hairy with three rows of yellow hairs down the centre. One leaf clasps the stem partway up.



### **Fireweed** *Chamaenerion angustifolium*

**Height:** up to 2 m    **Flowers:** July-August  
**Habitat:** prolific along roadsides, open woodlands, and disturbed ground



Tall plant with many pink flowers down the stem. Leaves are lance-shaped.

## PINK & RED FLOWERS

### **Common Milkweed** *Asclepias syriaca*

**Height:** up to 120 cm    **Flowers:** July  
**Habitat:** meadows, field edges, waste ground



Rounded clusters of pink flowers. Leaves are oblong and rounded on ends with velvet-like hairs underneath. Preferred food of Monarch butterfly caterpillars.



### **Swamp Milkweed** *Asclepias incarnata*

**Height:** up to 150 cm    **Flowers:** August  
**Habitat:** moist to wet soils



Rounded clusters of pink flowers. Leaves are opposite, long and lance-like. Preferred food of Monarch butterfly caterpillars.

## PURPLE & BLUE FLOWERS

### Sea Lungwort, Oysterleaf *Mertensia maritima*

Height: 20 cm

Flowers: June-August

Habitat: coastal shorelines



Bell-like flowers start pink and turn blue when open. Flowers at the end of leafy stems. Leaves are bluish-grey to greyish-green and are waxy. Forms a sprawling mat.

### Sea Lavender *Limonium carolinianum*

Height: 30-60 cm

Flowers: July-September

Habitat: saltmarshes and seashores



Small pale-purple flowers growing along one side of stem in loose, branching clusters. Blue-grey leaves are basal and lance-shaped.

## PURPLE & BLUE FLOWERS

### Square-stemmed Monkeyflower

*Mimulus ringens*

Height: up to 120 cm

Flowers: July-August

Habitat: wet areas such as marshes and edges of streams

Blue-purple flower with distinct yellow throat. Flower has two fused upper petals and three petals forming lower lip. Leaves are long and opposite, generally lance-shaped.



### Common Self-heal / Heal-All *Prunella vulgaris*

Height: up to 30 cm

Flowers: June-September

Habitat: waste ground, meadows, lawns

Cone-like cluster of purple flowers. Top two petals fused to form a hood, lower three form a lip. Lowest lobe is larger and fringed. Stems are square in cross-section.





## FLOWERING SHRUBS

### Eastern Teaberry / Wintergreen

*Gaultheria procumbens*

**Height:** up to 15 cm    **Flowers:** July-August  
**Habitat:** coniferous and deciduous woods, barrens

White to pink, nodding, urn-shaped flowers, single or in small clusters. Trailing plant. Leaves are alternate, round to elliptical, and a shiny dark green with toothed margins.



### Common Bearberry *Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*

**Height:** up to 10 cm    **Flowers:** May-June  
**Habitat:** gravelly and sandy soils, over rocks



Pink, nodding, bell-shaped flowers at ends of stems. Trailing plant. Leaves are spoon-shaped, dark green, and shiny, with paler undersides.

## FLOWERING SHRUBS

### Partridgeberry *Mitchella repens*

**Height:** up to 3 cm    **Flowers:** July  
**Habitat:** mossy mixed woodland floors



White, tubular flowers, in pairs. Trailing evergreen plant. Heart-shaped leaves are a distinct bright green with obvious light-coloured veins. Bright red berries often persist throughout the year.

### Creeping Snowberry *Gaultheria hispida*

**Height:** 5 cm    **Flowers:** June  
**Habitat:** shady mixed woodland floors



Single, tiny, white, bell-shaped flowers, often hidden under foliage. Trailing plant. Leaves are small, egg-shaped, and shiny. Underside is paler, with a few hairs. (Photo shows small white berries, flower photo not available.)

## Harriet Irving Botanical Gardens



The Harriet Irving Botanical Gardens (HIBG) are located on the south side of the KC Irving Environmental Science Centre at Acadia University, in Wolfville, Nova Scotia.

This six-acre garden was conceived and donated by the families of Arthur, James, and John Irving in memory of their mother, Harriet Irving, who was a native plant enthusiast. The gardens represent nine native habitats of the Acadian Forest Region: bog, marsh, coastal headland, sand barrens, mixed woodland, wet woodland, coniferous forest, deciduous forest, and calcareous woodland. Each habitat has a unique set of trees, plants, and shrubs.

The garden also features a herbaceous border that showcases spectacular examples of Acadian Forest wildflowers. Many are native to Nova Scotia, and others, which are typically only found in the southern reaches of the region, can also be seen. The following page shows some examples of flowers that can be found in the herbaceous border.

The gardens are open to the public every day of the year except Christmas Day (and may be closed due to weather conditions). There is no admission charge for individuals, and guided tours can be arranged for groups for a small fee ([botanicalgardens.acadiau.ca](http://botanicalgardens.acadiau.ca)). It is well worth a visit to see first hand the wonder and diversity of the Acadian Forest Region.

Many of the plants in the guidebook can be found in the HIBG, and you are encouraged to visit it to see the colour and diversity of our native plants and consider how to include native plants into your own gardens.

### Photos of Acadian Forest flowers in the Harriet Irving Botanical Gardens



Blue Lobelia  
*Lobelia siphilitica*



Cardinal Flower  
*Lobelia cardinalis*



Canada Anemone  
*Anemone canadensis*



Cut-leaf Cone Flower  
*Rudbeckia laciniata*



Wild Bergamot  
*Monarda fistulosa*



## Resources



We used many resources in putting this guide together, including web-based sites found by searching for plants of the Acadian Forest Region (too many to list here). However, we found the following resources to be very useful and encourage you to use these, or any of the many other field guides, for more comprehensive information on the wildflowers and shrubs of Nova Scotia.

### Books

Boland, T. 2012 *Trees and Shrubs of the Maritimes*, Boulder Publications, 235 p.

Boland, T. 2014 *Wildflowers of Nova Scotia: Field guide*, Boulder Publications, 413 p.

Fielding, R.R. 2016 *Shrubs of Nova Scotia*, Nimbus Publishing, 170 p.

Munro, M.C., Newell, R.E., and Hill, N.M. 2014 *Nova Scotia Plants*, Nova Scotia Museum, Halifax, NS, Canada, 1493 p.

National Audubon Society *Field Guide to Wildflowers Eastern Region North America*, 2001, Alfred K. Knopf, 880 p.

### Websites

Atlantic Canada Conservation Data Centre (ACCDC) accessed at: [accdc.com/en/ranks.html](http://accdc.com/en/ranks.html)

Database of Vascular Plants of Canada (VASCAN) accessed at: [data.canadensys.net](http://data.canadensys.net)

iNaturalist accessed at: [inaturalist.ca](http://inaturalist.ca)

Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History (NSMNH) accessed at: [naturalhistory.novascotia.ca](http://naturalhistory.novascotia.ca)

Wikipedia accessed at: [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)

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