



Living for a decidedly brief time is the essence of ephemeral. Although ephemerals in the plant world can occur at anytime throughout the growing season, spring is when they are most appreciated for their fleeting presence. Searching for and finding those first treasured leaves or flowers popping through the crust of snow - brings renewed hope for another year of growth. The delicate beauty of natural spring ephemerals masks their innate strength, softening the toughness of the human soul. Will they survive the snow, ice, and cold or won't they? Well, of course they will, if they are where they should be. Gardeners often try too hard to protect that which doesn't need protection. When placing ephemerals in the home landscape, carefully consider cold hardiness and heat tolerance, soil moisture needs, and sunlight requirements - then put them in and enjoy. If properly placed, you won't have to go nuts on overprotection from any of the elements. Please remember that with any plants that have native ties - do not dig from the wild, either for your own enjoyment or garden enhancement.

All of the following are lovely spring plants that will delight you today and then not bother you much past tomorrow. Ephemerals are perfect plants for gardeners that like things to be tidy from season to season as they come in with a breath of freshness and leave without so much as a by-your-leave. And for those gardeners that like to jam as many plants in as possible throughout the growing season, ephemerals offer more opportunities to intermittently add some spice.

*Anemone blanda* (windflower) flowers in shades of blue early in spring - lasting only for a few weeks. They may take a bit to get established but will spread and flourish in moist, partial shade.

*Chionodoxa lucilae* (Glory-of-the-snow) is a blue and white flowering bulb that prefers the same conditions as other bulbs - well drained soil in full sun to partial shade. The "glory" of this one is the very, very early pleasure and the utter defiance of winter that it brings to the garden space. *Claytonia virginica* (spring beauty) is a pretty, low to the ground, woodland plant sprouting numerous stems of whitish-pink flowers in spring. The foliage forms a fleeting frame for the delicate flowers.

*Dicentra* (bleeding heart) with the beautiful heart or breech shaped flowers is a spring staple in many shade gardens. Good soil moisture and a bit of shade are the keys to garden longevity, no matter which species you choose.

*Dodecatheon pulchellum* (shooting star) need well-

drained moist soils and some afternoon shade to provide the necessary base from which white to pinkish flowers will shoot up, out and then aim once again toward the earth. There are many different species to choose from to accommodate growing sites and bloom color preferences. *Eranthis hyemalis* (winter aconite) will often push through the snow to bring a bit of yellow sunshine to a shady spot. These have the biggest impact when planted en masse in a somewhat naturalized setting. Well-drained soil with good moisture is very important to successful spread.

*Erythronium americanum* (yellow trout lily) pop right out the ground without bothersome stems - these very early spring flowers will delight you with spotted or heavily veined leaves on which rest the miniature flowers which really do look like lilies. A shady, moist setting will make these plants really happy.

*Mertensia virginica* (Virginia bluebells) are a joy to see early in the growing season. The pink buds will open to clear blue flowers, reaching higher as the stems and leaves emerge, grow, and push the bells upward.

*Narcissus* (daffodils) - seriously, how can you not have some daffies in the garden? These are some of the happiest flowers out there and with so many to choose from...get busy selecting your favorites. These make wonderful understory and inter-planted flowers. They come, they flower, they go. Some will leave you with a fragrant memory, some remain best left alone - all are fun to see.

*Podophyllum peltatum* (mayapple) emerge from the ground as tightly bound leaves held against the stem, unfurling to their full glory in moist, open woodlands - white flowers and fruit will follow if the plants are mature. These plants will spread by seed and rhizomes and can, fleetingly, cover a relatively large area if happy in their placement.

*Sanguinaria canadensis* (bloodroot) is another spring plant that will often flower before the leaves fully emerge. They prefer a nice woodland setting of partial shade in moist but well-drained soils.

*Trillium* is the plant symbolic of spring in North America. Moist shade and plenty of peace and quiet will help these beauties along to happiness. They require a lot of patience in establishment as they have a very long maturation period.

Ephemerals are ephemeral - whether plant or human - fresh and green at the start of their season and by the time the summer heat arrives - ready to disappear for a much needed rest.