

THE LEAFLET

newsletter of the West Virginia Botanic Garden



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Trillium: Threefold Beauty

Written by Philip Smith, Executive Director

Each spring in the Appalachian woods, just as winter loosens its grip, trillium makes a quiet but unmistakable entrance. Rising from the leaf litter on a single sturdy stem, its three leaves, three petals, and three sepals form a perfect botanical triad. This symmetry is the hallmark of the genus *Trillium*, one of the most iconic wildflowers of eastern North America and a beloved symbol of Appalachian forests. It's also my favorite flower.

Trilliums are perennial herbs in the bunchflower family (Melanthiaceae) in the order Liliales, though their morphology sets them apart from true lilies. Instead of a leafy stem, trillium produces a single whorl of three broad bracts that look like leaves, topped by a solitary flower. Depending on the species, the flower may be a variety of colors and it may sit upright or nod toward the forest floor.

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From the Preserve

Philip Smith, Executive Director

Some of the most meaningful moments at the West Virginia Botanic Garden happen in motion: crossing a bridge, stepping onto the boardwalk, pausing mid-span to search for signs of life below. These structures are not just ways through the landscape—they are part of how we experience it. This year, the Garden is launching Bridges to the Future, a capital campaign focused on restoring and reimagining three essential connections: the Wetland Boardwalk, the Barred Owl Trail bridge, and the main pedestrian bridge over Jones Run leading into the Tibbs Run Preserve.

Two of these structures are showing their age. Rotting decking and worn supports require constant repair and raise safety concerns. The third, while still sound, needs to be widened so emergency and maintenance vehicles can reach this section of the property when needed. Together, these projects represent a necessary investment in safety, access, and stewardship.

At the same time, this campaign offers something more hopeful. Donors at higher levels will be able to sponsor sections of these bridges and boardwalks, literally becoming part of the path forward. Sponsors will be acknowledged on the section they helped improve, creating a lasting connection between people and place.

Bridges carry us onward. With your help, these will do so for decades to come.

OUR MISSION | *The West Virginia Botanic Garden at Tibbs Run Preserve seeks to foster learning, inspiration, and well-being through the beauty and wonder of plants, the natural environment, and culturally enriching experiences.*

Here We GROW

Generous restricted gifts are making a big impact—and giving the Garden even more to celebrate! These funds are helping launch the first phase of our Central Garden Master Plan, setting an inspiring long-term vision for growth and stewardship into action. Other funding has delivered an eco-friendly improvement with a new outdoor bottle-filling water station to keep visitors refreshed and reduce waste, and seed money for improvements to the Service Building.

WITH HELP FROM

Jane Tanner Charitable Fund
The Oakland Foundation
West Virginia Nursery and Landscape Association

VISITORS CENTER & GIFT SHOP

reopens March 12

Thursday — Sunday
10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

MARCH

4	Visual Arts w/Alex Gaujot: Neurographic Art	6:00 p.m.
6	Friday Family Walk and Craft	10:00 a.m.
7	West Virginia Mammals	10:00 a.m.
8	Seed Starting Workshop	2:00 p.m.
13	Hike with a Naturalist	10:00 a.m.
14	Celtic Storytelling	2:00 p.m.

APRIL

1	Visual Arts with Alex Gaujot: Basic Acrylics	6:00 p.m.
4	Daffodil Walk	10:00 a.m.
4	Woodcock Walk	7:00 p.m.
9	Nature Board Games Night	6:00 p.m.
10	Friday Family Walk and Craft	10:00 a.m.
11	Wetland Amphibian Wonders	10:00 a.m.
17	Hike with a Naturalist	10:00 a.m.
19	Drum Circle	4:00 p.m.
22	Printing with Plants: Botanical Art Workshop	6:00 p.m.
25	Tree Celebration	10:00 a.m.
25	Grow Your Knowledge: Native Plants	2:00 p.m.
26	A Season of Good Taste: Brunch in Bloom with Fish Hawk Acres	12:00 p.m.

MAY

1	Friday Family Walk and Craft	10:00 a.m.
2	Raising Solitary Bees	2:00 p.m.
3	Paper Flowers Workshop	2:00 p.m.
6	Visual Arts with Alex Gaujot: Watercolor	6:00 p.m.
8	Hike with a Naturalist	10:00 a.m.

MAY

9	WVBG Day	11:00 a.m.
14	Pressed, Sketched, & Observed: Making a Plant Book	6:00 p.m.
16	Warbler Walk	10:00 a.m.
17	Drum Circle	4:00 p.m.
19	Field Journaling	6:00 p.m.
24	Woodland Amphibian Wonders	10:00 a.m.

JUNE

3	Visual Arts with Alex Gaujot: Watercolor	6:00 p.m.
5	Friday Family Walk and Craft	10:00 a.m.
7	Best Friends Day: Symbiosis in Nature	2:00 p.m.
11	Summer Concert Series: Chris Felton and Michelle Fincham	6:30 p.m.
12	Hike with a Naturalist	10:00 a.m.
13	Young Birders Walk	10:00 a.m.
19	A Season of Good Taste: Burgers and Brews	6:00 p.m.
20	Wild and Wonderful Symbols	10:00 a.m.
21	Drum Circle	4:00 p.m.
22	Koji 101 Workshop	6:00 p.m.
25	Summer Concert Series: Wake Robin	6:30 p.m.
28	The Magic of Mud	2:00 p.m.

MEDITATION, Community, & Support

Sundays @ 10 a.m. in the Education Center
March — June

YOGA in the Garden

Wednesday Evenings @ 6 p.m. May — June
Friday Mornings @ 8:30 am in June

SPRING ACTIVITIES

LEARN MORE & REGISTER
AT WVBG.ORG



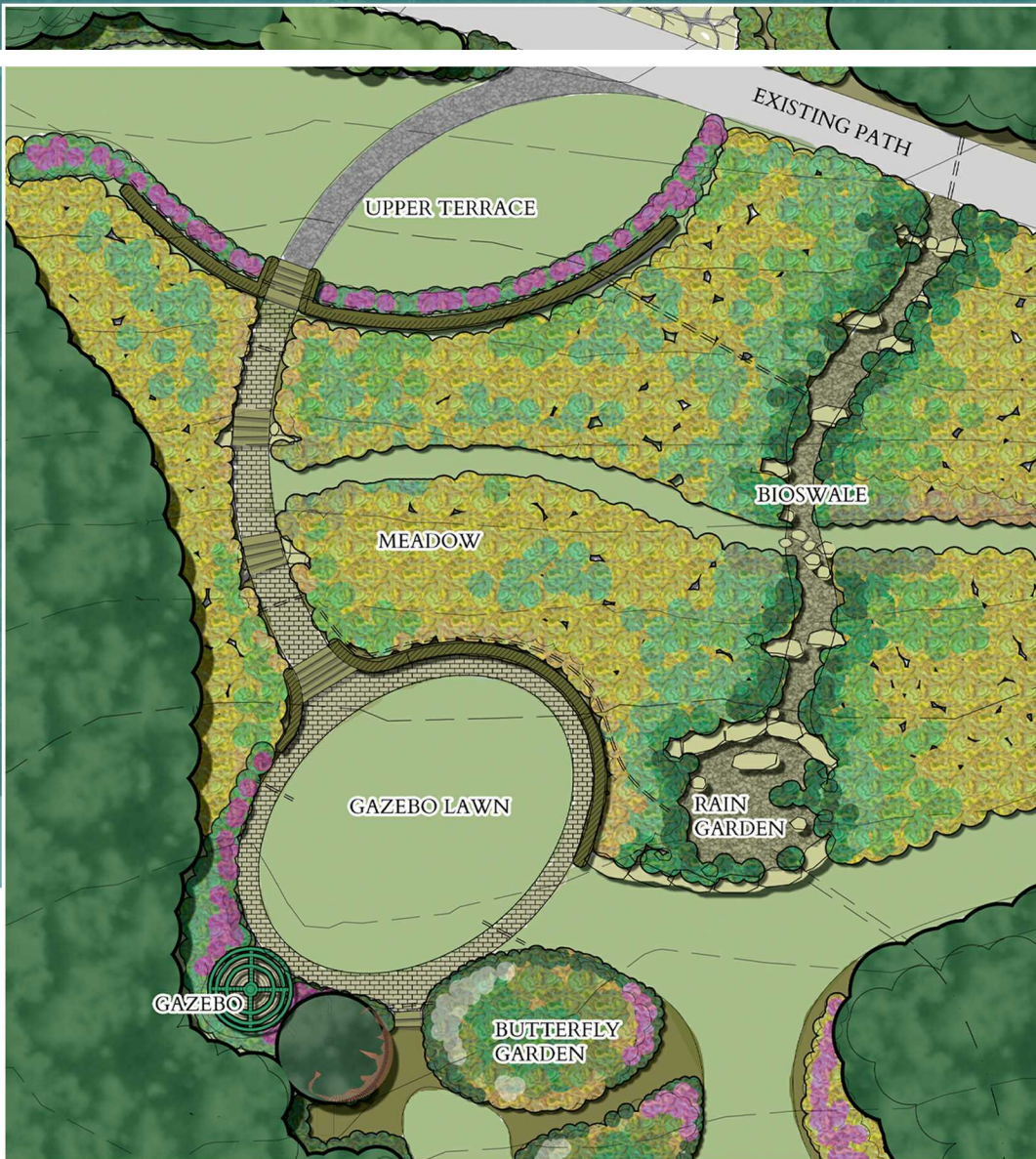
Responding to the Land: Phase One of the Central Garden Master Plan

Written by Phil Cole, WVBG Project Manager & Landscape Designer

David Culp, a celebrated garden designer and author once said (in regards to landscape design), "Respond to the land." Direct and simple. Meaning, let the landscape around us guide the initial design decisions. By observing and taking note of what is happening around us in any landscape, you can accentuate and promote existing qualities, thus minimizing impacts and added maintenance.

With that approach in mind, this summer the WVBG will be constructing the first phase of the Central Garden Master Plan, centered around the upper butterfly garden lawn and meadow. The garden selected Halterman Landscaping Company of Morgantown who has years of experience, particularly in natural stone work, the primary material for this phase. There are three main components of this phase of installation: providing the open garden space with additional structure, promoting connectivity between spaces, and managing stormwater.

The design includes a leveled upper lawn terrace defined by a radial stone retaining wall, centered on a longer-spanning view across the basin. That view's impact will expand with future phases further accentuating this vista. The upper terrace will be accessed from the existing pathway near the kiosk, and the lower edge of the space will be lined with bold annuals. A set of steps will pierce through the upper wall and connect the upper terrace to a lower gazebo lawn. This formal oval lawn space, edged with a paver walkway, will offer several seating options in the heart of the Garden and provide



another option for outdoor gatherings and weddings. Between the upper terrace and the gazebo lawn, we will continue to enhance the existing meadow that stretches to the Education Center, adding seasonal color with native perennials.

The other portion of this plan focuses on control of current and future stormwater through diversion and bioretention practices. During springtime, several areas of the Butterfly Garden are affected by heavier rain events. The current swale that meanders along the east side will be broadened and enhanced into a functioning bioswale, which will then terminate at a small rain garden near the gazebo lawn. Integrated wall drains for the new retaining walls will also daylight into the swale. Not only does this approach help control storm runoff, but it will also provide opportunities for unique planting communities and interpretation.

This first phase of our master plan provides more structure and function to the existing Butterfly Garden and adjacent meadows. It will provide the foundation for more exciting phases to come; each designed to strengthen the Garden's essence and history by carefully and creatively responding to the land.

Construction is slated for this coming summer. There will be some disruption around the butterfly garden area for several weeks, so we appreciate your patience as we make exciting improvements at the WVBG!



*The Visitors Center
& Gift Shop*

will reopen

*Thursdays - Sundays
starting March 12.*

*Hill & Hollow at
the Garden will
follow once the
weather is suitable.*



Growing Together: Hill & Hollow at the Garden

Written by Marion and Ali Ohlinger, Guest Contributors

We are Ali and Marion Ohlinger and we love food. For more than twenty years, we have been part of the Morgantown food community. Our journey began with our first restaurant, Solera, and continued with Richwood Grill and then Hill & Hollow. These past few years, after we closed our brick-and-mortar location, we have been mobile with our food truck and catering services—and now we are excited to soon be offering our food at the West Virginia Botanic Garden Visitors Center with Hill & Hollow at the Garden.

Across all of these venues, our ethos has remained the same. We focus on providing locally sourced Appalachian-inspired foods. Our hope is to spotlight and celebrate what makes Appalachian food unique. Appalachia itself is diverse, rare and, at times, a little weird—and that's something to be proud of. We try to pay homage to our Appalachian and West Virginian oddities through the food we create.

Our first encounter with West Virginia Botanic Garden occurred many years ago when we were asked to provide food and wine for one of the earliest fundraisers. At that time, the Garden was a much smaller affair, with no buildings, and only the beginnings of the Wetland Boardwalk and Fairy Garden. The event took place under tents in what is now the Event Lawn, with a rain contingency plan to move everything into the Shade Garden if needed. Since then, we have watched the Garden evolve into what it is today.

We have been lucky enough to remain part of West Virginia Botanic Garden throughout the years. We have catered for weddings and fundraisers, conducted cooking classes, and been a regular headliner of the 'A Season of Good Taste' dinner series.

Not only has the Garden held a consistent spot in our professional lives, but it also holds a special place in our personal lives. Our family has taken many walks in the Garden, exploring and marveling at the natural diversity, beauty, and seasonal changes it offers. Each visit we find something new, and each walk is unique. We are excited to continue our relationship with the West Virginia Botanic Garden and look forward to feeding you soon.

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INFINITY NATURAL RESOURCES

Get More from Your Garden

Written by Abigail Waugh, WVBG Education Director

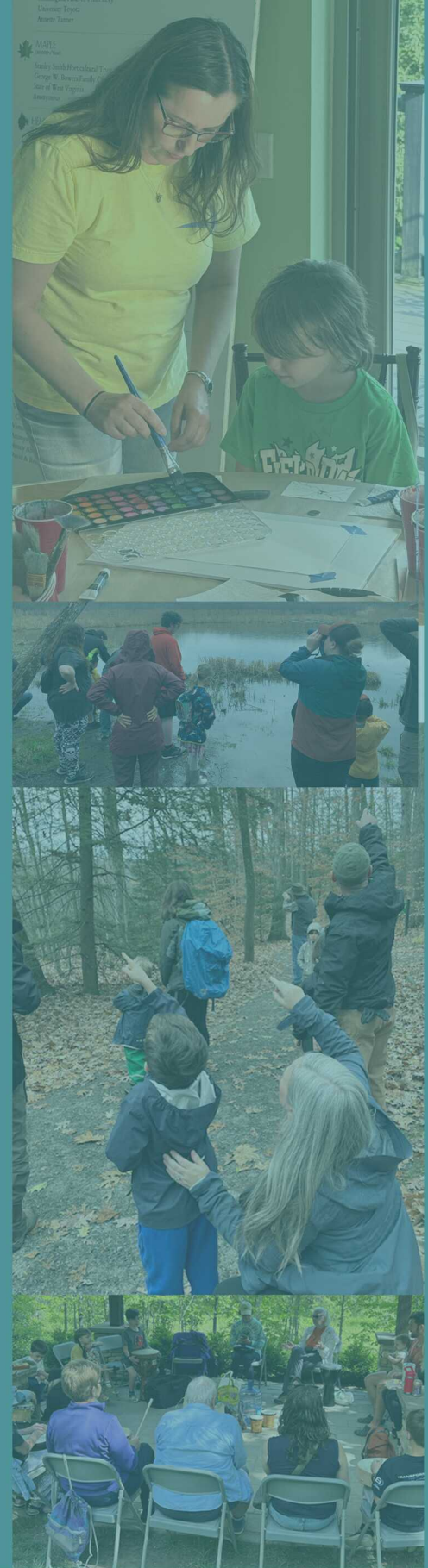
Have you ever wanted to know more about a native bird, plant, or animal you've encountered in the wild? Or maybe you've felt inspired by the beauty of the Garden to create a work of art, but didn't know where to start. If you've had these thoughts or any like them, we invite you to get more from your Garden by attending some of our workshops and educational programs. These programs offer unique opportunities to learn new skills, build community, and gain new perspectives on the Garden and the world around us.

In 2025, the Garden offered more than 120 program and workshop opportunities on a wide range of topics. For example, during the span of one particularly busy week last May, visitors could join a drum circle, learn about geocaching, enjoy outdoor yoga, practice field journaling, and discover the world of woodland amphibians! This wide variety of programming allows each visitor to explore the Garden in the ways that are important to them.

Kristi Crutch, a WVBG member and regular nature program attendee, finds it nearly impossible to choose a single favorite experience. "I have to say, I hate to pick. Most of them are wonderful," she shared when asked to reflect on her time at the Garden. Still, a few programs stand out—Owls in the Garden, The Secrets of Fireflies, and a variety of birding walks—which have sparked a deeper interest in conservation. These experiences, Crutch says, have inspired her beyond the Garden gates, as they "encourage me to be more vocal about these things" in her community. Fellow Garden member Kristin Betancourt echoes that sense of impact, noting how the programs have shaped her relationship with the outdoors: "In short, I simply find more joy being outside after everything I've learned there." With spring 2026 programs exploring topics from amphibians and solitary bees to migratory warblers and daffodils, there will be no shortage of opportunities to discover, learn, and deepen connections with nature at the Garden.

While these nature programs are the heart of what the WVBG does, they are by no means the limit. Explore your artistic side with one of our monthly visual arts series, or botanical craft workshops such as making paper flowers. Take a moment to focus on your physical and mental well-being with our weekly yoga classes or meditation sessions. If you're looking for something for the whole family to do together, consider our monthly Friday family walks, annual WVBG Day celebration, or a unique event such as celebrating International Mud Day.

Such a variety of programming wouldn't be possible without a wonderful community of both presenters and attendees. Many of our program leaders generously donate their time to share their knowledge with others. Attending programs at the WVBG is also a great way to make new connections in the community. "Every interaction I've had at the Garden has been friendly and welcoming, and I've developed a few friendships with other attendees over our shared interests," said Betancourt.



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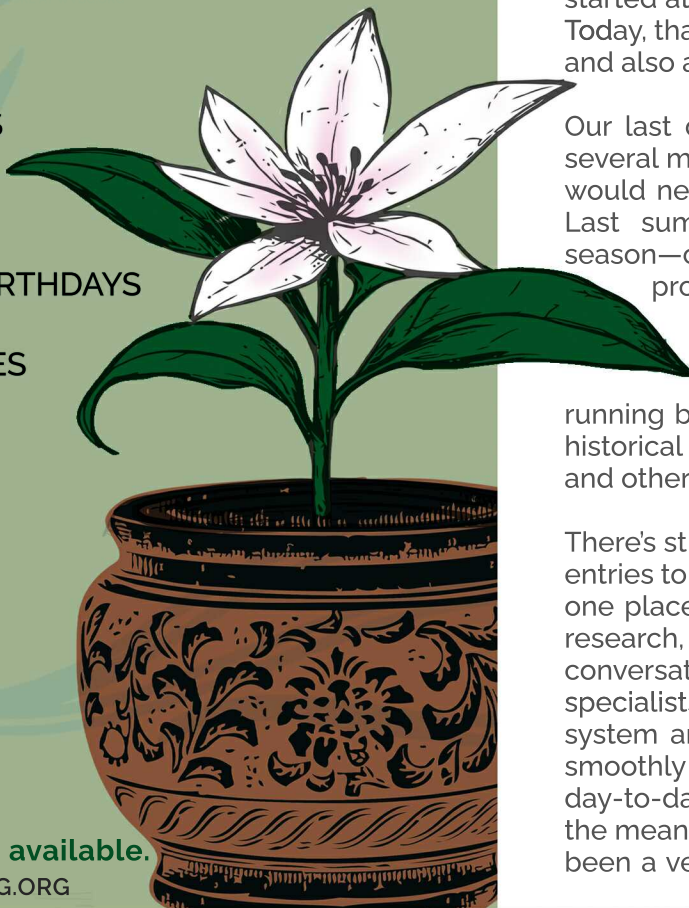
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Migrations, Databases, and Duplicates, oh my!

Written by Cheryl Carnegie, WVBG Executive Assistant

As many of you know, I've been with the Garden for nearly ten years now. In that decade, we've moved offices and welcomed new directors, raised buildings and paved roads, launched a rental program, opened a gift shop, more than quadrupled our annual programs—and, perhaps most memorably (i.e. frustratingly) for me, changed database management software three times.

Database talk may not be thrilling cocktail-party material, but it is the pump that keeps this organization running. Our software helps us stay connected with you, manage memberships, register participants for educational programs, and sell tickets and sponsorships for our annual gala. Anyone who's been through a database migration knows it's a bit like translating an ancient language into a modern one: slow, meticulous, and occasionally baffling. When I started at the Garden, we had 312 active memberships. Today, that number is closer to 850—wonderful growth, and also a lot more to translate.

Our last database transfer happened in 2021. It took several months, and at the end of the process I swore I would never do it again. But needs must, as they say. Last summer—right in the middle of our busiest season—circumstances required us to begin the process once more. We first moved to an interim system to get us through the summer, then transitioned to a new long-term platform in the fall. Event registration was up and running by October, and just last week, the rest of our historical data—membership payments, renewal dates and other donation data—finally made the jump.

There's still some translating to do, and some duplicate entries to clean up, but now all our tools and data are in one place, and we're on solid ground. After months of research, countless phone calls, and many conversations with patient salespeople and data specialists, we're genuinely excited about this new system and confident that everything will be running smoothly very soon. As you can imagine, though, day-to-day operations have been very challenging in the meantime. Membership renewals in particular have been a very manual process, so if we've stumbled, we

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CHANGE

*is hard at first,
messy in the middle,
and gorgeous
at the end."*

~ Robin Sharma

truly appreciate your patience. We're also moving toward more eco-friendly, electronic communication, so please keep an eye on your inbox and make sure we have your correct email address—my Latin is a little rusty, and a detail or two may have been crossed along the way. We've taken this opportunity to streamline the membership program as well, making it easier for us to track and explain, and for members to understand. The most noticeable change will be your expiration date. All memberships now run on an annual basis and will maintain the renewal date of your initial payment in the new system.

Members remain the heart of the West Virginia Botanic Garden. Your support means more than you know, and we're always happy to help. Please don't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions. Last year was both difficult and messy on a lot of fronts, but here's to a gorgeous future for the Garden in 2026 and beyond.

*Please direct membership questions to Cheryl Carnegie at
304-322-2093 ext.3 or membership@wvbg.org*

Rooted *in your support.*



Every gift in 2025 helped advance the Garden's mission.

THANK YOU *for believing in what we do.*





Trillium: Threefold Beauty

(Continued from page 1)

What you don't see is just as impressive. Trillium grows from a rhizome and follows a slow life cycle. From seed to first bloom can take seven to ten years—sometimes longer. Seeds are dispersed by ants in a process called myrmecochory (which is fun to say); the ants are attracted to a fatty appendage on the seed called an elaiosome, carrying it off to feed it to larvae and inadvertently planting the next generation.

Trillium evolved as a specialist of rich, deciduous forests, thriving under the dappled light of spring before tree canopies fully leaf out. Like most spring ephemerals, this early bloom allows it to photosynthesize, flower, and set seed before summer shade takes over. Its slow growth and long lifespan make it a reliable indicator of forest health as large trillium populations often signal old, undisturbed woodland.

Ecologically, trillium supports early-season pollinators such as beetles and flies, particularly for the darker red species that emit faint, earthy scents. While not flashy nectar factories, trilliums are an essential part of the woodland food web.

In folklore, some traditions warned against picking the flowers, claiming it would bring bad luck or storms. While superstition may have carried the message, the advice was sound: removing a trillium flower can weaken or even kill the plant.

Trillium has also been used historically in herbal medicine. One common name is "bethroot," which likely evolved from "birthroot," whereas certain species were used by Indigenous peoples and early settlers to regulate menstrual bleeding, facilitate



childbirth, alleviate symptoms of menopause, and for wound-healing purposes, though modern conservation ethics discourage digging the roots of wild plants. Other common names of certain trillium species include toadshade, wood lily, and wakerobin — which is serendipitous to this article as the local Appalachian folk band Wake Robin will be performing in our Summer Concert Series this year.

West Virginia is home to several native trillium species, including Large White Trillium (*Trillium grandiflorum*), Red Trillium (*T. erectum*), Little Sweet Betsy (*T. cuneatum*), and Painted Trillium (*T. undulatum*). In the Mountaineer Country region—spanning forests, hollows, and high ridges—trillium carpets emerge in early April, particularly in rich cove forests, and along shaded slopes. My favorite place to find them is in the riparian of high elevation mountain streams.

Trillium feels like a seasonal milestone. Its appearance coincides with redbud bloom, returning songbirds, and the first true sense that winter has released its hold on the mountains. Spotting trillium is as much about the emergence of spring as it is about the spectacle of beauty. It signals that the woods are waking up again. As an avid trout angler, when the warming air stirs activity from the insects and fish in our mountain brooks and creeks, so too do the adjacent hillsides come alive with these magnificent flowers—probably one of the main reasons trillium are my favorite spring ephemeral. I find that I spend as much time admiring trillium patches as I do casting flies to rising trout.

While Appalachia is a global hotspot for biodiversity and those of us who call this place home feel a sense of prideful ownership of trillium, sister species can be found across Asia and western North America. In Japan, *Trillium camschatcense* blooms in cool northern forests, often larger and more dramatic than its eastern cousins.

Despite regional differences, all trilliums share the same quiet elegance and slow, patient rhythm—a reminder that some of the most enduring plants move at their own pace. In the end, trillium isn't just a flower. It's a lesson in restraint, resilience, and the understated beauty of Appalachian spring.

Pictured on cover and above left: Large White Trillium (Trillium grandiflorum). Previous page: Little Sweet Betsy (T.cuneatum) and Painted Trillium (T. undulatum). Above: Large White Trillium (Trillium grandiflorum) and Red Trillium (T. erectum).



LEAVE YOUR LEGACY

Join the Rhododendron Circle by naming the WVBG as a partial beneficiary of your IRA, it's a fast and simple way to help secure the future of the WVBG.

Renewal. Maintenance. Development.

Turn a requirement into a gift by directing part of your Required Minimum Distribution to support the continued renewal of natural spaces, trail and garden maintenance, and long-term development at the WVBG. It's a meaningful, tax-smart way to give back to a place you love.

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