

# Recommended Trail Hikes for Viewing Peak Spring Wildflowers

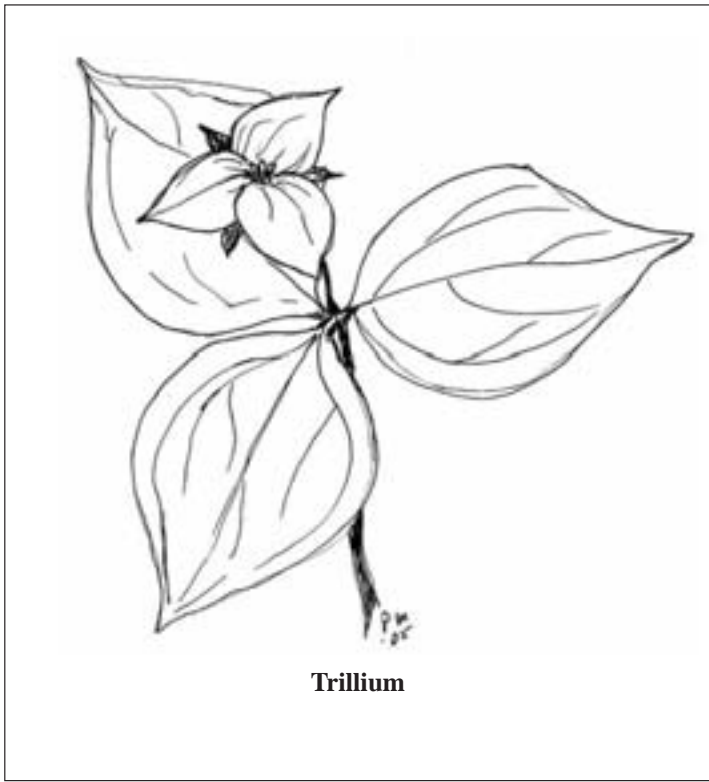
Recently my mother cut a column by Craig Wilson out of *USA Today* about walking (cutting articles out is her way of keeping me up to date). In this column, Mr. Wilson mentions a study that stated doctors can look at feet to figure out how well a person will age. I have no idea how it's done, and I'm not sure what my feet say about me. I don't think they're particularly attractive, but I certainly use them a lot, as most of us do on the Island.

It's the nature of the Island that you have to use your feet to get most anywhere, either by walking or biking. Most of us take it for granted. In fact, a friend of mine, who was doing a survey on exercise, said that when she asks people on the Island about their exercise routine, folks here never mention walking or biking to work, the post office, or the store.

A recent study of men shows that those who live in walkable neighborhoods are less likely to be depressed.

If you're thinking of taking a walk to relieve stress, get exercise, or just for the fun of it, right now on Mackinac it's a great time to do it, because the spring wild flowers are at their peak in the woods. I have a couple of suggestions as to what trails might be fun to bike or hike, depending on time and energy, to see some of the Island's finest flowers.

If you have only an hour or two to spend, you might want to begin on North Bike Trail, which comes off Garrison Road behind Fort Mackinac. Head inland until you come to Rifle Range Road. Cross the road and take what the map calls the former North Bike Trail, locally known as Fern Way. This



Trillium



Hepatica



## Nature Notes

By Patricia Martin

will take you below Fort Holmes and to Sugar Loaf. From there, continue along on Juniper Trail until you reach Cliff View Trail. Take Cliff View up the hill (west) a short way until you reach Morning Snack Trail. Head south on Morning Snack, which will take you to Fort Holmes Road. From here you can visit Point Lookout, Fort Holmes, the

cemeteries, and Skull Cave before you head back to town (down hill) along Garrison Road. This is a great walk, and there are a number of variations you can take instead.

Along the way, you will see a number of Mackinac's wild flowers. On North Bike Trail, one of the first flowers that you might spy is the wood anemone (*Anemone quinquefolia*). This

plant has a single flower consisting of five or six white sepals (instead of petals) up to one inch wide. Halfway up the stem is a whorl of usually three leaves, deeply cleft and coarsely toothed. These plants are usually four to eight inches in height. Along North Bike Trail you may also see hepatica, also known as liverleaf (*Hepatica acutiloba*). These short plants (four to six inches in height) produce flowers, which can be white, pink, lavender, or blue, with two to five "petals." The leathery leaves, three lobed, that are visible with the flowers are last year's leaves. The new leaves are just beginning to open and are quite hairy.

Further along the trail, and especially abundant along Fern Way (the former North Bike Trail), is one of the showiest of our spring flowers, the large-

flowered trillium (*Trillium grandiflorum*). Standing 12 to 18 inches in height, these plants with a single white, three-petaled, large (two to three inches wide) flower have three broad leaves in a whorl below the flower stalk. As these flowers age, they turn pinkish. These showy flowers blanket the hillside and forest floor below Fort Holmes on the east side.

Also abundant along Fern Way is the yellow trout lily, also known as adder's tongue (*Erythronium americanum*). These six- to 10-inch plants host a single flower with six curving yellow petals. Six prominent red-brown or yellow anthers extend beyond the bell-shaped blossom. At the base of the flower stalk are two elongated, leathery brown and green mottled leaves. Another yellow-flowered plant growing in the same area is the downy yellow violet (*Viola pubescens*). This bright yellow pansy-like flower has heart-shaped leaves along the same stems and the flower itself. The stems, leafstalks, and leaf margins are downy. Other violets may be seen along Juniper Trail, including the Canada violet (*Viola canadensis*), white petaled with purple veins, and the pale violet flowered dog violet (*V. conspersa*). Forget-me-nots (*Myosotis scorpioides*), one of the non-native plants in the woods, are also blooming with their dainty white, blue, or pink five-petaled flowers uncoiling along a stem.

Along Juniper and Morning Snack trails, other spring ephemerals are blooming as well. The dainty spring beauty (*Claytonia virginica*), with its small pink or white five-petaled flowers with dark pink veins, has now appeared with its leathery, long, narrow, grass-like leaves. The toothworts (*Dentaria sp.*) are up and blooming, both the cut-leaf and the broad-leaf. These plants are recognized by a stalk of loosely arranged white four-petaled flowers. These inflorescences emerge from a pair of three-lobed leaves (in the case of the broad-leaf) and a whorl of three deeply cut lacy leaves (in the case of the cut-leaf toothwort). These plants are less than one

Sit back, relax, enjoy the entertainment and have "Yachts and Yachts of fun"



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