



Round-lobed Hepatica (*Anemone americana*) – Woolly Harbinger of Spring



Did you Know?

- Hepaticas are one of the first flowers to bloom in Spring.
- Native Americans used a tea derived from the leaves to cure a number of ailments.
- Hepaticas are poisonous in large doses. They can also be irritating to the skin if handled.

Photo : 2013 Brian Popelier

Habitat – Upland woods and forests, deciduous forests

Size – 70-170 cm in height

Range – Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec south into the eastern United States

Flowering Date – March - May

Status – S5/ Common in Ontario

Other Common Names – Liverleaf, Snow Trillium, Blue Anemone, Kidneywort



Identification:

Purple, pink or white six - ten petaled flowers sit atop a single, leafless stem covered in wooly hairs. Flowers often found in clumps. The leaves are distinct with three lobes ending in a rounded tip. The flower stocks are upright standing over the flattened basal leaves. The leaves are light green at first but turn a purplish, wine colour as the season wears on and can often be seen standing out from the snow in the winter.

Photo : 2013 Brian Popelier

Interesting Facts

The plant gets its name from the leathery purple-brown basal leaves, which resemble the shape of the liver. Many early herbalists believed that the shape of the plant determined its usefulness in the treatment of liver ailments.

Bees and flies are the primary pollinators. The plant uses ants to distribute their seeds. As the seeds drop ants pick them up and disperse the seeds to other areas.

A very close relative of this flower is also found in similar habitat along the Bruce Trail. The Sharp-lobed Hepatica (*Anemone acutiloba*) looks almost identical except its leaves are pointed at the tips. There has been some evidence that suggests the two species may hybridize.

Round Lobed Hepatica on the Niagara Escarpment

An early Spring hike under the open treed canopy along the entire length of the trail will produce scattered clumps of colour amongst the melting snow and brown leaf litter of the forest floor.

The Bruce Trail Conservancy is continually acquiring and protecting land along the Niagara Escarpment, including land that contains large deciduous forests that are perfect habitat for the Round-lobed Hepatica.