

Virginia Spiderwort: A Bedford County Hiker's Delight

Kathy Nelson, Bedford Extension Master Gardener

My husband and I decided to hike up Harkening Hill this morning. Haven't been there in a couple of years, so up we went. We were greeted by clusters of Virginia Spiderwort (*Tradescantia virginiana*), blooming in abundance along the entire trail. The delicate flowers gleamed in brilliant shades of eye-catching purples and pinks. Such a glorious, breath-taking sight to behold. Mornings like these are priceless.



Tradescantia virginiana
pick4.pick.uga.edu

A few interesting facts:

“Virginia spiderwort is a large but dainty perennial to 3 ft. with long, bright-green, narrow leaves. The thick clump of slender, branched stalks are topped by groups of blue or purplish, three-petaled flowers up to 2 in. across. Spiderwort flowers close by midday and last only one day... Spiderworts are so named because the angular leaf arrangement suggests a squatting spider. The flowers open only in the morning; the petals then wilt and turn to a jelly-like fluid. Each hair on the stamens of this showy spiderwort consists of a chain of thin walled cells; the hairs are a favorite subject for microscopic examination in biology classes because the flowing cytoplasm and nucleus can be seen easily.” (1)

This wonderful native plant has a large habitat, not just Virginia. It grows in all of Eastern North America and California. (2)

“Virginia spiderwort is a vigorous plant that likes moist soils but will adapt to drier, average garden soils. The plants are often seen in old-fashioned gardens and work well as part of a perennial border. They are recommended for bogs and naturally wet sites

where the plants can form large clumps when grown in full sun. The plants will flower in both sun and shade” (3)

Have you heard of any of these other names for Virginia Spiderwort?

Dayflower
Flower-of-a-day
Job's tears
Snake-grass
Spider-lily
Trinity
Trinity-lily
Widow's-tears

Tradescantia virginiana (Virginia spiderwort) was the Virginia Native Plant Society's chosen "Wildflower of the Year 2008" (4) Seek out and admire this lovely plant during your next Blue Ridge hike or scenic drive. If you'd like to add some to your garden area, please do so by purchasing at a local nursery or from a friend's garden. This allows the woodland and path-side natives continue to flourish where they lie. Thanks.



flickr.com

Happy Digging,

Kathy Nelson

Bedford Extension Master Gardener

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Resources:

- (1) http://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id_plant=TRVI
- (2) <http://plants.usda.gov/core/profile?symbol=TRVI>
- (3) http://plants.usda.gov/plantguide/pdf/cs_trvi.pdf
- (4) <http://vnps.org/wildflowers-of-the-year/2008-virginia-spiderwort-tradescantia-virginiana/>

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