

Mississauga Garden Council

*Wildflowers
of Riverwood*

Field guide to wildflowers of Mississauga's garden park
and the Greater Toronto Area

Nina Katalin Barabas, PhD & Eva Sabrina Bruni

Mississauga Garden Council

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South Peel Naturalists' Club

Mrs. Gillian Lien-Robinson
MGC Member

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Map of Riverwood courtesy of the City of Mississauga

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Message from the MGC's President and Executive Director

It is an honour to contribute an introductory comment to this marvellous 'labour of love'. On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Mississauga Garden Council, I would like to express our deep appreciation and gratitude to Eva and Nina for their thorough and professional presentation. I also would like to thank all of the many volunteers who have made contributions to this volume. We trust that their work will enhance and deepen the visitor's appreciation of the natural beauty of Riverwood. The all-season approach to the descriptions of the wildflowers and the stories and myths associated with them will help make the enjoyment of a walk in the forest and fields of Riverwood a very memorable experience.

Thank you, Eva and Nina, and to all our volunteers for your dedication to this project and what it will mean for the Mississauga Garden Council and the visitors to Riverwood and others who want to learn more about our natural world and its wonders.

John Huether
President

A monumental achievement and the culmination of years of field research, *Wildflowers of Riverwood* is an authoritative field guide to the diverse wildflower heritage of Riverwood park in Mississauga, Ontario. The detailed high resolution photographs of 150 plant species are combined with natural history, practical uses and anecdotal information, reference to whether the plant is native or introduced, all with an easy-to-use cross-indexing system.

Wildflowers of Riverwood is a must-have resource for the weekend park stroller, amateur hobbyist or botanist and is useful in many temperate environments. This first in a series of field guides is a reflection of the considerable knowledge and commitment by volunteers of the Mississauga Garden Council and a reflection of strong community support.

Douglas Markoff
Executive Director

*To each and every nature lover,
who sees a universe in a flower.*

Introduction

How It All Started

First and foremost, the idea for the *Wildflowers of Riverwood* came from the park itself. Great beauty and biodiversity exist in our suburban city of Mississauga and right in our backyard.

In the summer of 2004 Eva was a summer student working for the Mississauga Garden Council and Nina a volunteer with the Stewardship Committee. While hiking throughout the area we were both inspired by the abundance of wildflowers growing along the way. As we began to document the vegetation in the area, we realized that a photographic collection of wildflowers would be an invaluable asset to the MGC and the community.

People from the community had also approached the MGC, seeking information about the flowers they had seen in the area. Although an ecological report listing all the plants and their general location in Riverwood has been available at MGC since 2001,¹ this comprehensive list was compiled more as an inventory for the records of Riverwood and as a base for future restoration efforts rather than as a resource for the community.

As a result of many discussions, the concept emerged of a photographic collection of Riverwood wildflowers to be accompanied by brief anecdotes. The purpose would be to make a guidebook for everyone to enjoy.

From our hikes in the forest, enthusiasm for nature and yearning to learn about as many plants as we could, we became great friends. Therefore, not only did a guidebook grow out of this project, but a close friendship as well.

Riverwood

With a central location in the City of Mississauga, Riverwood's 60 hectares (150 acres) of urban forest is one of the largest mosaics of natural flora in the Credit Valley. Two-thirds of the park is being preserved as an urban wilderness while the rest has been designated for formal gardens, parking lots and buildings, including the restored heritage barn, the MacEwan Field Station (a 150-year-old farmhouse), and the enchanting Chappell House. Riverwood abounds with wildlife and vegetation. The park is home to over 40 species of birds, white-tailed deer, red foxes, black squirrels, rabbits and many other animals.¹

There are ten vegetation communities in Riverwood, ranging from dry and moist old field, mature and young deciduous forest, mixed forest, to thicket, swamp, meadow, marsh and even sandy areas.¹ With such a diversity of land and microclimates, combined with the changing of seasons, it is easy to imagine the variety of plant species growing in this city park. All of it is easily seen along the inviting public trails.

Approximately 400 plant species have been reported in Riverwood since the 1970s.¹ Besides wildflowers, the flora also consists of trees, shrubs, grasses, sedges, ferns and mosses. It is interesting to note that the park includes considerable areas of tableland forest, very little of which is left in the City of Mississauga.¹ The vegetation is predominantly native, but there are many (around 36% of the total) non-native plants as well. The park has met several ecological criteria which qualify it to be part of a local Area of Natural and Scientific Interest, as designated by the Ministry of Natural Resources. There are few areas in the city with as great a diversity of plant species as Riverwood.¹

Rightly called “The Jewel in the Crown of Mississauga” by Mayor Hazel McCallion, Riverwood is the ideal destination for anyone visiting or living in Mississauga.

Why Wildflowers?

Black-eyed Susan
Rudbeckia hirta

Chicory
Cicorium intybus

Bull Thistle
Cirsium vulgare

Against a backdrop of shrubs and trees, along roadsides and sidewalks, wildflowers can significantly enrich our lives by providing colour and beauty to an otherwise drab landscape. A colourful display of yellow Black-eyed Susan, light blue Chicory and bright purple thistles are just a few examples of the wildflowers that can brighten anyone’s day.

Although wildflowers may appear to have no direct practical uses for us, much of the wildflower vegetation around us was and still is used for a wide range of purposes such as food, teas, flavourings, soap, clothing, medicine and


Alien or Non-native refers to plants that did not originally occur in an area where they are now established but have been introduced from another place as a direct or indirect result of human activity. Many alien plants are naturalized, thoroughly established in the area. In this book, **alien** refers to plants that are not native to Southern Ontario and the Region of Peel. For this information we consulted all the listed references, but found especially useful the compiled lists by North-South Environmental Inc.,¹ Webber,⁷ and Blaney & Kotanen.⁸ Persons who are planning to create their own native garden might find this information especially useful, as many of the wildflowers make beautiful and low maintenance garden flowers. In fact, there are many nurseries nowadays that specialize in growing and promoting native species (see Resources).


Some species are **rare** for this area (such as the White Trout-lily), while others are **invasive** (such as Garlic Mustard). **Invasive** refers to a plant that has moved into a habitat and reproduced so aggressively that it has displaced some of the original components of the vegetative community.¹⁰ Both native and alien plants can be invasive. In this book, we refer to species **invasive in Southern Ontario**. For information on invasive plants for Southern Ontario we found especially helpful the compiled lists by Havinga & Group.¹¹ We are positive that this knowledge will encourage people to help protect the rare plants and control the invasive ones, possibly during an organized MGC Stewardship activity.

Whole monographs could be written about each and every plant, but we will leave you now with this small introduction into the wonderful world of plants and trust that we aroused your curiosity and desire to learn more about wildflowers. We hope that you will enjoy this guide as much as we did preparing it, and cherish it as a useful ‘companion’ during your walks.

Symbols

* Flower names preceded by an asterisk (*) are alien in Southern Ontario

 Warning—see information in text

 Attracts hummingbirds

 Attracts butterflies or moths

 Attracts honeybees

 Invasive in Southern Ontario

White Trillium

Trillium aux grandes fleurs

Trillium grandiflorum (Michx.) Salisb.

Family: Bunchflower/Melanthiaceae

Formerly in the Lily/Liliaceae family, it has been re-classified based on new DNA research.¹² This plant must grow for at least six years before it flowers. When the fruit of this plant matures, it will split open and expose clumps of sticky seeds that are surrounded by a bump (called an elaiosome) that ants find delicious.¹³ Ants carry the trillium seeds back to their nest, eat the elaiosome and leave the remainder seed behind, essentially 'planting' the seed away from the parent plant. White Trillium is the flower emblem of the Province of Ontario.

Habitat: Rich shady woods,
on property back woods

Flower colour: White

Blooms: April to June

Native



PINK to RED FLOWERS

Wild Geranium

Géranium maculé

Geranium maculatum L.

Family: Geranium/Geraniaceae



The genus name comes from the Greek word *geranion*, meaning ‘crane’, referring to the fruit capsule which looks like a beak of a crane; for that reason another name is Spotted Cranesbill.¹⁵ In the past, Wild Geranium was believed to be a treatment for venereal disease.³

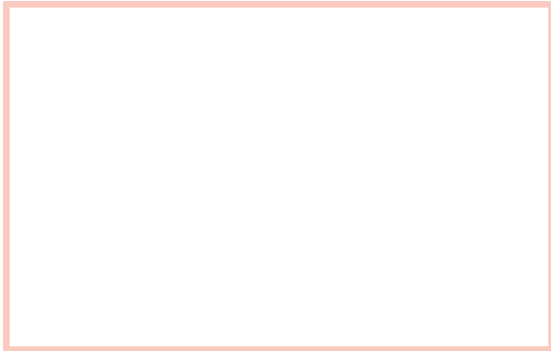
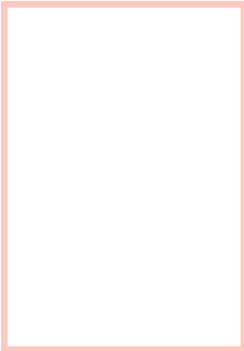


Habitat: Edges and openings in deciduous forests; shady woods along Culham Trail and along the trail in C5-D5

Flower colour: Pink to lavender

Blooms: April to June

Native



ORANGE to BROWN FLOWERS

**Orange / Common Daylily*

Hémérocalle fauve

Hemerocallis fulva L.

Family: Lily/Liliaceae

The genus name, *Hemerocallis*, and common name, Daylily, refers to the fact that each flower blossom only lasts one day.¹³ This plant has been used as a source of food in China and Japan for thousands of years, where the flower buds, flowers, roots, shoots and leaves can all be eaten.¹³



Habitat: Along the trail in E6, moist woodland on Chappell property, Chappell gardens
Flower colour: Orange
Blooms: June to August
Alien



YELLOW FLOWERS

Yellow Trout-lily; Adder's Tongue

Erythrone d'Amérique; Ail doux

Erythronium americanum Ker Gawler

Family: Lily/Liliaceae

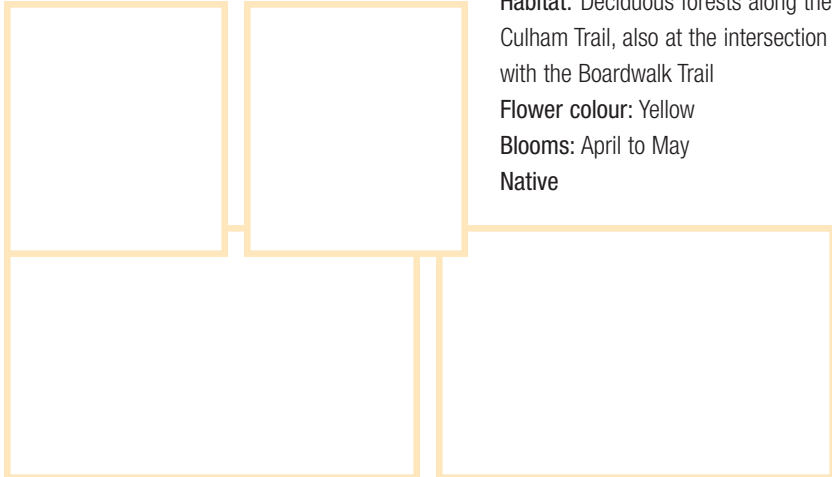
The common name Trout-lily refers to the similarity between the speckled leaves and the speckled back of a trout fish.¹² This plant spreads runners through the soil to make new bulbs, forming extensive underground networks that help hold the soil together.⁵ Some colonies are up to 300 years old. At least 99% of its corms produce only one leaf and it takes a seed or new corm at least five years to produce a flower.⁵ The seeds are spread by ants. Immediately after the snow melts and all the trees are still dormant, this plant draws up to almost half of all nutrients from the breakdown of fallen leaves. These nutrients would otherwise be washed away in spring runoff. Later when the Trout-lily dies, its decaying leaves will provide nutrients to the surrounding vegetation. Therefore, this plant plays an important role in the forest ecosystem.⁵

Habitat: Deciduous forests along the Culham Trail, also at the intersection with the Boardwalk Trail

Flower colour: Yellow

Blooms: April to May

Native



Jack-in-the-pulpit; Indian Turnip

Petit prêcheur

Arisaema triphyllum (L.) Schott

Family: Arum/Araceae



The genus name, *Arisaema*, comes from the Greek words *aris*, meaning ‘arum’, and *haema*, meaning ‘blood’, which refers to the reddish blotches on the leaves of some species. The species name, *triphyllum*, means ‘three leaflets’.¹² The common name refers to the likeness of a priest or ‘Jack’ standing in a church pulpit with a canopy.⁵ This plant begins life as a male, with pollen-bearing flowers, but after about three years when it has stored enough nutrients, the plant becomes female, with all female flowers. However, if the plant is damaged or if it doesn’t have enough nutrients to produce berries, it may become male again.⁵ The First Nations people and early settlers used the cooked or dried fruit and the peppery root for food.³ The whole plant contains calcium oxalate crystals which are very irritating¹⁶ and cause a strong burning reaction in the mouth if the root is eaten raw,¹⁷ however, this is eliminated by cooking.



Habitat: Moist areas in the forest along the trail in C4-5, D5 and along Culham Trail

Flower colour: Green or purplish-brown

Blooms: April to June **Native**

Poison Ivy

Sumac grimpant; Herbe à la puce

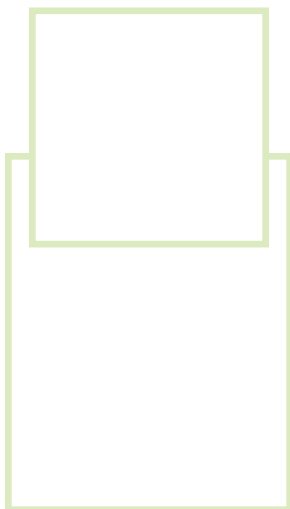
Rhus radicans L. ssp. *rydbergii* (Small ex Rydb.) McNeill

(*Toxicodendron radicans* (L.) Kuntze)

Family: Cashew/Anacardiaceae



To remember how to identify this plant, use the common rhyme 'Leaves of three, let it be', which describes the characteristic three pointed leaflets, the central of which has a longer stem than the two side leaflets. The stem of the plant is woody at its base. The leaves, stems and even roots and berries of the plant contain an oil (urushiol) that can irritate the skin of humans, causing inflammation and blistering with direct contact.¹⁷ If exposed to the irritant, wash immediately and thoroughly with cold water, or swab with rubbing alcohol. The rash usually appears within 24–48 hours after the contact. This plant has various forms; it occurs most commonly as a groundcover on roadsides but can also exist as an erect shrub or as a vine on trees. Poison Ivy is an important food source for fall and winter animals and winter songbirds that eat the berries, and for deer and mice that eat the leaves.

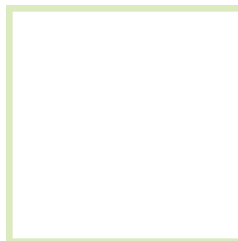


Habitat: Open forests, thickets; sunny areas along the edges of woods around Chappell House, abundant along the trail in D8, E9 and F9

Flower colour: Greenish

Blooms: May to July

Native



BLUE to VIOLET FLOWERS

**Creeping Bellflower*

Campanula fausse raiponce

Campanula rapunculoides L.

Family: Bellflower/Campanulaceae



The genus name, *Campanula*, derives from the Latin word *campana*, meaning 'bell', referring to the bell-shaped flowers.¹³ The species name, *rapunculoides*, comes from *rapa* meaning 'turnip', as the roots have been boiled like parsnips and eaten hot with a sauce.¹⁴ These flowers once were believed to be the thimbles of witches.¹³



Habitat: Shady areas around Chappell House and along the trail in C5, D5, E5

Flower colour: Violet-blue

Blooms: July to September

Alien



PURPLE FLOWERS

**Periwinkle; Myrtle*

Pervenche mineure; P. petite

Vinca minor L.

Family: Dogbane/Apocynaceae



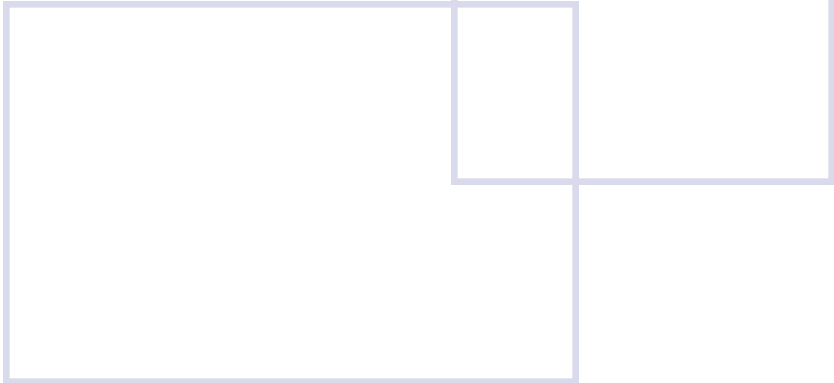
The genus name, *Vinca*, and the common name, Periwinkle, refer to the Latin word *perivincā*, meaning ‘to bind’.¹⁶ This plant has been used in homeopathy for preparation of a tincture or alcoholic extract used for haemorrhages, probably due to its astringent properties.¹⁴ Because Periwinkle was believed to have magical powers, it was used for making love charms and to exorcise evil spirits, thus the old name ‘Sorcerer’s Violet’ (or ‘Violette des sorciers’ in old French).¹⁴ This pretty, garden-escapee evergreen covers the grounds of the thickets and woodlands around inhabited areas very often shading out native vegetation.⁷ It is considered highly invasive but does not spread rapidly from major concentrations.¹¹

Habitat: Ground cover in the woodlands
opposite MacEwan Field Station

Flower colour: Purplish-blue

Blooms: March to June

Alien



Represented Plant Families

Please note that plant species within each family are presented in the following order:

English Common Name	French Common Name	Scientific Name	Page
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Amaranth/Amaranthaceae

The Amaranth Family of around 850 species primarily consists of herbs and sometimes shrubs or small trees distributed in tropical, subtropical and temperate regions worldwide.²⁶ Based on new DNA research, the Goosefoot/Chenopodiaceae family has now been included here.¹² Some other familiar species from this family are grown as ornamental plants: Amaranth (*Amaranthus* sp.), Globe Amaranth (*Gomphrena globosa*), and the cockscombs (*Celosia* sp.).

Pigweed, Red Root; Green Amaranth	Amarante à racine rouge	<i>Amaranthus retroflexus</i>	124
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Arum/Araceae

The Arum Family of about 2,000 species includes mainly herbs, occasionally shrubs, found mostly in the tropical regions, but some in temperate areas as well.²⁸ An interesting species that also belongs to this family is Titan Arum (*Amorphophallus titanum*), the plant with the world's largest inflorescence that can reach 3 m in height.

Jack-in-the-pulpit; Indian Turnip	Le petit pêcheur	<i>Arisaema triphyllum</i>	113
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Aster/Asteraceae (Compositae)

The Aster Family, with more than 22,000 species consisting of herbs, shrubs and, less commonly, trees has a global distribution especially in the temperate regions; it is the largest family of flowering plants in the world.^{12,28} Aster means 'star' in ancient Greek, referring to the star-like appearance of the flowers (asters, daisies, etc.).⁵ The previous name Compositae refers to the fact that the plants of this family have composed flowers called 'heads', in which tiny flowers form clusters and look like a big flower.²⁸ Many plants of this family have economic value because they can be cultivated for food and oil extraction, e.g., artichoke (*Cyanara scolymus*), lettuce varieties (*Lactuca sativa*), and sunflower (*Helianthus annuus*). Others are cultivated as nectar-producing 'honey plants' (especially the sunflower and some species of goldenrod) and still others as

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on the flora and fauna of Riverwood

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