

SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

Look for it now in southwest Ohio!

Spring 2022



Photos by Dave Woehr: Bloodroot flower, bloom and leaves, and root.

Bloodroot (*Sanguinaria Canadensis*)

By Dave Woehr, Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalist

Bloodroot is one of our earliest native wildflowers to appear in the spring. The large, snow-white, normally-eight-petaled flower can be up to two inches in diameter, making it stand out boldly against the drab winter forest floor that is just waking up. Bloodroot is found in mature woodlands having rich, undisturbed soils, where it blooms until the developing tree leaf canopy shades it out. The plant can be found by itself or in small clusters. Small insects pollinate the flower, allowing it to produce seeds for dispersal by late spring or early summer. The leaf of the Bloodroot is rather large and lobed, surrounding the stem that holds the emerging flower bud until the bloom is ready to open. The chunky root contains a sap-like juice that is bright red and even infuses its hues into the above-ground leaf and flower stems. Scratching, scraping or cutting the stems or root of the plant releases the "blood" which may stain any fingers or clothing with which it comes into contact.

Bloodroot is a member of the Poppy family. Native Americans were quite familiar with the plant and used the red juice it produces to decorate their clothing and baskets. They may have even used it as a form of branding to stain their horses for identification purposes, as well as for their own cosmetic skin decoration, war paint, and as an insect repellent. Other medicinal purposes have also been documented. In more recent times it has been used as a toothpaste ingredient.

Like all spring ephemerals, the Bloodroot is at its best when left alone and undisturbed where it is found growing. It should be admired and photographed, but not picked since it doesn't fare well or retain its delicate beauty if brought home to put in a vase, nor can it produce seeds for its next generation if not allowed to mature and complete its life cycle in the woods where it lives.

[Hisey Park](#), located outside Waynesville at 5443 Middletown Rd., Corwin, OH 45068, is a wildflower hot spot! To learn more about the spring ephemerals you may see, visit the Ohio Division of Wildlife's [Spring Wildflowers of Ohio Field Guide](#) and check out their [weekly report](#) to see what is currently in bloom.