

Ontario Envirothon 2023

OPTIONAL CHALLENGE: BLOOMING BUDS

Spring is well on its way, with plenty of green things popping up from the ground and starting to unfurl from trees. But, before leaves fill the canopies of our forests again, there are some plants on the forest floor taking in as much sun as possible in the narrow window between the frost abating and the trees above them shading the forests once again. Spring ephemerals are unique flowers found in the early spring, providing some of the earliest food for pollinators in the narrow window they're out in their full glory.

Our fifth and final challenge is optional, as it is not applicable to all of Ontario, and not all of you may have access to a well-established forest where spring ephemerals tend to thrive. Envirothon teams are challenged with finding and identifying 10 spring ephemerals. This can include but is not limited to, trilliums, Trout Lilies, Early Blue Cohosh, Bloodroot, Dutchman's breeches, hepatica, Spring Beauty, and others.

If you are unable to go into a forest that may have ephemerals, you are challenged to find 10 flowering plants. Some things to keep under consideration;

- No garden plants.
- Take 3 photos of every plant
 - Include a photo of the whole plant, the flower or flowering structure, and the leaves if visible.
- Post with the broadest category you are confident in.



Some resources that may assist you in your flower identification adventures:

- [Ontario Wildflowers](#) - website for identifying wildflowers native to Ontario with a handy visual guide.
- [An online dichotomous key for identifying flowers](#)
- [A guide to Woodland Plants in the Credit River Watershed](#) - while regionally specific, this guide has some great ID tips and some common flowers listed.
- [All about Spring Ephemerals](#) - a short introductory video from Ontario Parks.

GOAL:

As a team, collectively make 10 observations of any spring ephemeral or wildflower. Each observation must have 3 notes on why you have identified it as such. Garden plants will not be included.