

# Spring beauty has tasty root

AS EACH day of spring arrives, the sun rises earlier and reaches a little higher in the sky. Its warming rays heat both water and land.

When the water temperature reaches 40, walleye move toward rivers to spawn.

When the sun moves higher in the sky, it also warms the forest floor, hitting it more directly and for a longer time than in winter. Its rays reach the forest floor in early spring because tree leaves have not devel-



nature  
**Timothy Nowicki**

oped to shade the ground below.

EARLY SPRING wildflowers such as bloodroot, hepatica, trillium,

trout lily and spring beauty bloom only when sufficient sunlight reaches the forest floor. When tree leaves intercept the solar photons for their own use, spring wildflowers will already have set seed.

One early wildflower that I have seen carpeting the forest floor at a Michigan Nature Association Preserve near Clarkston is the spring beauty.

It grows in such profusion at Timberlands Preserve that a walker must be very careful to avoid treading on the blossoms.

SPRING BEAUTY does not usually grow much taller than 8-8 inches. It has two long, narrow, grass-like leaves that branch out opposite each other near the base of the stem. Along the stem, white flowers with five petals grow to be about an inch across.

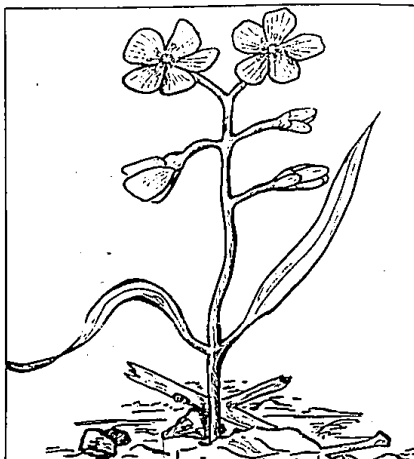
Flower color may vary to a pink, but most of the flowers look pink because of narrow red veins that radi-

ate outward from the center. These red veins are believed to serve as guidelines to direct pollinating insects to the center of the flower.

The warming sun causes the root to produce a new season of growth. As a potato sprouts new growth, so does the spring beauty.

And like the potato, the root of spring beauty is edible. They can be eaten raw or cooked. Though not very big, they taste like a cross between a very good baked potato and a roasted chestnut. Deer, moose and elk prefer to eat the flowers and leaves.

Spring beauty has two long, grass-like leaves and petals that seem pink because of their narrow, red veins.



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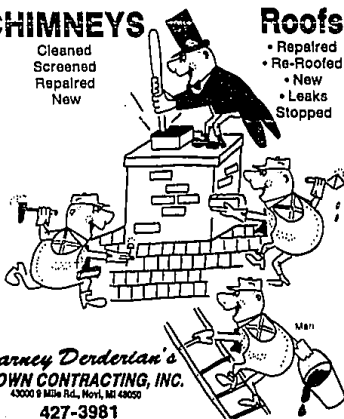
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