

Wildflowers of the National Forests in Alaska



Liverleaf wintergreen

Pyrola asarifolia

Evergreen perennial, to 16" tall. Leaves stalked, arising from plant's base, oval, with smooth margins, leathery and shiny. Flowers pink, numerous, bell-shaped, attached to upper half of leafless central stalk. In forests and thickets from Juneau to north and west.



Early blueberry

Vaccinium ovalifolium

Deciduous shrub, average 6' tall. Leaves with smooth to slightly toothed margins. Flowers pink to bronze, urn-shaped, emerge before or with the leaves. Fruit a spherical, dull or shiny, deep-blue to blackish berry. Common in forest understory, or in forest openings from sea level to subalpine. Edible. Alaska blueberry (pink-bronze flowers & shiny berries) is included here.



Fool's huckleberry

Menziesia ferruginea

Deciduous shrub, to 10' tall. Leaves with smooth margins, bluish-green, somewhat hairy. Flowers light pink to bronze, urn-shaped. Fruit, dry capsule. Common in forest understory from sea level to subalpine. Also called rusty menziesia, or false azalea.



Northern bog rosemary

Andromeda polifolia var. *polifolia*

Evergreen shrub, to 15" tall, spindly habit. Leaves alternate along stem, leathery, edges rolled under, distinct web-like vein pattern above, powdery white beneath. Flowers pink, urn-shaped. Common in peat bogs. Sea level to subalpine. Poisonous.



Bog laurel

Kalmia microphylla

Evergreen shrub, to 20" tall, spindly. Leaves opposite along stem, dark green, leathery, shiny, with 1 main vein visible on top, edges rolled under, whitish beneath. Flowers pink to lavender, saucer-shaped, about 3/4" across. Peat bogs in southeast Alaska from sea level to subalpine. Poisonous.

Alpine azalea

Kalmia procumbens

Evergreen dwarf shrub, mat forming, appressed to the soil or exposed rock faces. Heavily branched with somewhat shiny leaves $\frac{1}{4}$ " long or less, narrowly oval, with under-rolled leaf margins. Tiny flowers (a little less than $\frac{1}{4}$ " wide) white to magenta, open bell-shaped with 5 shallow petals, upward facing. Fruit a dry capsule. Common in the alpine.



Wandering fleabane

Erigeron peregrinus var. *peregrinus*

Perennial herb with a single stem to 20" tall. Leaves few, arising from base of plant, narrow toward base, stem leaves narrowly lance-shaped to oblong. Single daisy-like flower-head with light pink to purple ray flowers. Center of flower-head yellow. Common in meadows and muskegs, from sea level to alpine.



Nagoonberry

Rubus arcticus

Small perennial herb to 6" tall. Erect stem with solitary flower and 2-5 leaves. Leaves 3-lobed, or with 3 leaflets, somewhat toothed, finely hairy. Flower with 5 deep pink to magenta petals, about 1" across. Fruit deep red, similar to a blackberry, about $\frac{2}{3}$ " across. Beach meadows, bogs, wet meadows. Delicious fruit highly prized for pies and jams.



Salmonberry

Rubus spectabilis

Deciduous shrub to 13' tall. Stems prickly. Leaves with 3 sharply-toothed leaflets. Solitary flowers with 5 deep pink petals, 1" across. Fruit similar to a raspberry, yellow to red. Plant grows rapidly, forming dense thickets. Common in disturbed areas, forest edges, subalpine meadows. Fruit edible but watery and rather insipid, good for sauces and jam.



Fireweed

Chamerion angustifolium

Perennial herb, from 3-10' tall. Unbranched stem erect with numerous lance-shaped leaves, flowers on upper half of stem. Many showy flowers to 1.5" across, with 4 deep pink petals. Produces fluffy airborne seeds. Can form spectacular stands in disturbed or burnt-over areas. Spring shoots are edible. Nectar produces excellent honey.





Dwarf fireweed

Chamerion latifolium

Perennial herb from 1-3' tall. Stem variously branched, reclining to erect. Leaves oval, margins smooth, fleshy with whitish "bloom". Flowers deep pink, large (1.5" across). Common in sandy areas, river bars, recently deglaciated areas, rocky areas in subalpine and alpine. Also called river beauty.



Pretty shooting star

Dodecatheon pulchellum

Perennial herb, to 18" tall, leaves and flowering stems arising from plant's base. Leaves lance-shaped to spoon-shaped, blunt, margins smooth. Showy flowers in few-flowered clusters atop leafless stem. Deep pink petals sweep back from the white, yellow and dark purple "center" or point of the flower. Abundant in coastal and forest meadows, to alpine.



Tall mountain shooting star

Dodecatheon jeffreyi

Perennial herb, to 18" tall, leaves and flowering stems arising from plant's base. Leaves lance-shaped to spoon-shaped, blunt, margins smooth. Showy flowers in few-flowered clusters atop leafless stem. Deep pink petals sweep back from the white and dark purple "center" or point of the flower. Common in bogs.



Mountain Indian paintbrush

Castilleja parviflora var. *parviflora*

Perennial herb, stems clustered, erect, to 18" tall. Leaves 3-5 lobed, hairy. "Flowers", deep pink to magenta, clustered on upper portion of stem. "Flowers" are actually modified leaves (bracts) enveloping the inconspicuous true flowers, which are green. Common in subalpine and alpine meadows.



Whorled lousewort

Pedicularis verticillata

Perennial herb, erect, stems to 10" tall arising from plant's base. Leaves pinnate, appear almost lacy, arranged in whorl around the stem. Flowers tube-shaped, asymmetrical, deep pink to purplish red; clustered in dense whorls on upper part of the stem. Common in low elevation, subalpine, and alpine meadows.

Beach pea

Lathyrus japonicus var. *maritimus*

Perennial herb, climbing, trailing, stems to 5' long. Angled in cross section. Leaves, opposite, pinnate with 6-12 broadly elliptic leaflets, curling tendril at the tip. Flowers in loose clusters, pea-like, purple. Fruits look like small dark pea-pods to 3" long. Abundant along marine shores and beach meadows.



Common butterwort

Pinguicula vulgaris

Perennial herb to 7" tall, leaves and leafless stem arising from plant's base. Leaves smooth, broad, yellow-green, somewhat slimy with rolled margins. Flower, violet-shaped, with spur, 1 per stem, deep lavender-purple, up to 1" long. Grows on wet substrates, rock faces, beach meadows, bogs, wet sub-alpine and alpine areas. Catches and digests small insects on leaves.



Western columbine

Aquilegia formosa var. *formosa*

Perennial herb to 40" tall. Stem branched. Leaves arising from stems and base of the plant. Leaves with 3 leaflets each with 3 rounded lobes, smooth and delicate. Flowers bright orange-red and yellow, about 1.5" long, on lax stems. Occasional to common along forest edges, in meadows from sea level to alpine. Flowers attractive to hummingbirds.



Common red paintbrush

Castilleja miniata

Perennial herb, stems clustered, erect, to 32" tall. Leaves lance-shaped. "Flowers", scarlet, clustered on upper portion of stem. "Flowers" are actually modified leaves enveloping the inconspicuous, green true flowers. Common in upper beach meadows. Hybridizes with Unalaska paintbrush, resulting in swarms of plants ranging in color from yellow to scarlet.



American skunk cabbage

Lysichiton americanus

Robust perennial herb. Flowers and leaves arise from a vertical rhizome. Tiny flowers are aggregated into a long-stemmed, spike to 12" long; emanating a skunky-odor when blooming. Flower spike ensheathed by a bright yellow modified leaf. Leaves ovate, erect, and fleshy with entire margins; up to 5' tall. Leaves develop after flowering begins. Common in wet, poorly drained areas.



PURPLE

ORANGE / RED

YELLOW



Yellow pond-lily

Nuphar polysepala

Perennial herb, aquatic. Leaves mostly floating on surface, entire margins, oval to heart-shaped, about 6-12" across, fleshy. Flowers floating, about 4" across, with about 10 fleshy yellow petals. Fruit, a large many-seeded capsule. Common in ponds and lakes. Low to middle elevations. Rhizomes (roots) poisonous.



Yellow marsh marigold

Caltha palustris

Perennial herb, stem variously branched, erect to sprawling, to 16" tall. Leaves rounded to kidney-shaped, margins slightly scalloped, fleshy, variable in size, up to 6" across. Flowers yellow, to 1.5" across, buttercup-like. Grows in marshes, bogs, quiet shallow streams. Poisonous.



Villous cinquefoil

Potentilla villosa

Small, slightly sprawling perennial herb, to 1' tall. Leaves with 3 toothed leaflets, whitish-hairy. Flowers showy with 5 yellow petals. 2-several flowers at top of leafy stalks. Common in cracks of upper beach boulders, maritime cliff faces. One of the first plants to bloom in the spring.



Stream violet

Viola glabella

Small perennial herb, about 6" tall. Leaves heart-shaped on long stems. Flowers pansy-shaped with 5 yellow petals. 3 lower petals with purple lines. Common in forest edges, along streams and roads. One of the first plants to bloom in the spring.



Alaska paintbrush

Castilleja unalaschcensis

Perennial herb, stems clustered, erect, to 32" tall. Leaves lance-shaped. "Flowers", yellow, clustered on upper stem. "Flowers" are actually modified leaves enveloping the inconspicuous green true flowers. Common in upper beach meadows, subalpine meadows. Hybridizes with scarlet paintbrush, resulting in swarms of plants ranging in color from yellow to scarlet.

Monkey flower

Mimulus guttatus

Annual or perennial herb with leafy stems, 4-20" tall, sometimes branched. Leaves in pairs along the stem, oval, toothed, various sizes to 2" long. Flowers bright yellow, about 1" long, snap dragon-like, lower lip with brownish-red spots, longer than upper lip. Common in disturbed wet or muddy areas, pond and stream margins, sea level to alpine.



Western Canada goldenrod

Solidago lepida var. *lepida*

Perennial herb, erect, to 30" tall. Leaves lance-shaped, sessile all along the stem. Flowers small, numerous, clustered on upper portion of the stem. Occasionally common in disturbed areas and meadows at low to middle elevations.



Deer heart

Maianthemum dilatatum

Perennial herb to 10" tall. Leaves 2-3, up to 6 inches long. Flowers, tiny, with 4 white petals, in a dense cylindrical cluster at top of the upright stem. Fruit, spherical berries (forming in photo), mottled green, and brown turning red. Not flavorful. Common in low to middle elevation forests, forest edges. Often the forest groundcover. Also called false lily-of-the-valley, or deerberry.



Clasping twistedstalk

Streptopus amplexifolius

Perennial herb, to 3', often branched, stem bent in zig-zag pattern. Leaves oval, pointed at tips, powdery white beneath. Flowers bell-shaped, hang singly beneath leaves on thin, sharply bent stalks. Fruit oval berries, deep red-violet when mature. Common in forests, forest edges, meadows, sea level to subalpine.



White bog orchid

Platanthera dilatata

Perennial herb, to 2' tall. Stem erect and unbranched. Leaves lance shaped, sheathing stem. Flowers orchid-shaped, waxy-white, arranged in a dense cylindrical cluster on the upper third of the stem, very fragrant. Common in wet meadows, bogs, from sea level to alpine.



YELLOW

WHITE



Goat's beard

Aruncus dioicus

Tall perennial, average 7-8", arising from creeping rhizomes. Leaves with pointed tip and toothed margins; 2-3 pinnate on long, upright stalks. Flowers, white, minute, numerous; closely packed on graceful, lax flowering branches at the top of the plant that look like white plumes. Flowering early in the summer. Common along roadsides, riverbanks and in open areas.



Partridgefoot

Luetkea pectinata

Evergreen dwarf shrub to about 5" tall. Leaves matted, parsley-like (look like partridge feet) crowded along length of creeping stems. Flowers tiny, with 5 white petals, in dense clusters. Abundant in subalpine and alpine heath, often a ground cover. Occasional at bog edges at lower elevations.



Thimbleberry

Rubus parviflorus

Deciduous shrub to 10' tall. Stems without thorns. Leaves 4-9" across, maple-leaf shaped with large toothed lobes. Loosely clustered flowers, with 5 white petals, 1.5-2" across. Fruit raspberry-shaped, red. Flavor varies from woody to delicious. Occurs at towns, old human habitations, streamsides and open areas from Yakutat south.



Five-leaved bramble

Rubus pedatus

Deciduous creeping perennial herb to 6" tall. Leaves with 5 coarsely-toothed leaflets. Flower solitary with 5 white petals. Fruit 1-4 deep red drupelets (individual spheres of a raspberry-like fruit). Abundant in forests, often the dominant ground cover from sea level to subalpine.



Devil's club

Oplopanax horridus

Perennial shrub, erect, branched, to 15' tall. Stems thickly covered with yellow spines. Leaves maple-leaf shaped, toothed, to 2' wide, spines on the underside and on the leafstalks. Flowers tiny, white, in compact clusters at the tops of the stems. Fruits clusters of bright red berries, eaten by bears. Common in well-drained wet forests, sea level to subalpine.

Cow parsnip

Heracleum maximum

Perennial herb, erect, to 9' tall. Robust and hairy. Leaves maple-leaf shaped, arising from plant's base and stem, coarsely-toothed, large to 20" across. Flowers tiny, white, arranged in flat-topped clusters at top of thick stems. Common in beach meadows, forest edges, open areas from sea level to subalpine. Plant juice causes skin rashes. Also called wild celery.



Bunchberry

Cornus canadensis

Evergreen groundcover to 8" tall. Erect stem topped with 4-7 leaves in a whorl. Leaves oval, with "dogwood" texture. Tiny flowers clustered at top of stem atop 4 white modified leaves forming a structure that looks like a white flower. Fruit, mealy red "berries", not good to eat. Abundant at forest edges, forest openings, on rotting wood. Also called dwarf dogwood.



Single delight

Moneses uniflora

Evergreen perennial, to about 5" tall. Leaves, small, round, with finely-toothed margins, arise from base of plant. Single, waxy white, nodding flower on leafless stem, about 3/4" across. Flower very fragrant. Common in open forest. Fruit a dry capsule. Also known as wax flower, or bashful maiden.



Alaska bellheather

Harrimanella stelleriana

Evergreen dwarf shrub to 6" tall. Leaves short and needle-like, densely arranged along length of trailing stems. Flowers white to pinkish, bell-shaped and pendant. Fruit a dry capsule. Abundant in alpine heath, often a matted ground cover. Also known as Alaskan mountain heather.



Labrador tea

Rhododendron groenlandicum

Evergreen shrub, to 3' tall. Leaves lance-shaped, drooping, dark green, leathery, smooth, margins rolled under, thick mat of rust-colored hairs beneath. Flowers white, in semi-round clusters. Fruit a dry capsule. Common in boggy areas. Aromatic, leaves can be used as tea.





Swamp gentian

Gentiana douglasiana

Annual, erect to 8" tall, stem may be single or branched. Leaves few, oval, with smooth margins, arise from plant's base and from flower's stem. Flowers erect, funnel-shaped, with 5 petal-like lobes, whitish with purple streaks, about 2/3" long. Common in bogs from sea level to subalpine. Flowers open on sunny days. Also known as Douglas gentian.



Common yarrow

Achillea millefolium

Perennial herb, erect, 4" to 3' tall. Leaves highly dissected, lacy, often hairy, arise from plant's base and from flowering stem. Flowers tiny, in dense flat-topped clusters on upper part of plant, generally white, but can be pink. Common in open areas from sea level to alpine. Pleasantly aromatic, can be used as tea and potpourri.



Beachhead iris

Iris setosa

Perennial herb, erect, somewhat branched to 3' tall. Leaves long and narrow, clasping stem. Flowers, showy, about 4" across, blue to purple. Wet upper beach meadows, upper estuaries, wet lowland meadows. Occasionally in dense stands. Poisonous.



Nootka lupine

Lupinus nootkatensis

Perennial herb with erect flowering stem, to 3' tall. Leaves arise from plant's base and from flower's stem, palmate, with 5-8 oval leaflets, up to 5" wide. Flowers pea-like, blue to violet, in dense cylindrical clusters at top of stem. Fruits, hairy pea-like pods. Abundant on recently deglaciated areas, gravel bars, well drained meadows from sea level to subalpine.



Woolly geranium

Geranium erianthum

Perennial herb, stems lax to erect, to 3' tall. Leaves like deeply divided maple-leaves with toothed lobes. Showy flowers with 5 blue to violet petals, about 1" across, often in clusters of 2-3. Common in upper beach meadows and meadows from sea level to alpine.

Bluebell-of-Scotland

Campanula rotundifolia

Perennial herb, stems lax to erect to 1' tall. Leaves various, basal leaves round to heart-shaped on stalks, stem leaves linear to lance-shaped, widely spaced along the thin stem. Flowers bell-shaped with 5 pointed lobes, about 1" long, blue to purple or whitish with age. Common on rocky bluffs adjacent to beaches, rock faces, rocky meadows, sea level to alpine.



Larkspurleaf monkshood

Aconitum delphiniiifolium

Perennial herb, stems erect, to 2' tall. Leaves on stalks, mostly arising from plant's base. Like deeply divided maple-leaves with 5 toothed lobes. Showy flowers, deep blue, asymmetrical, hood about 1" long. Occasional in meadows from sea level to alpine. Most common in subalpine meadows.



Chocolate lily

Fritillaria camschatcensis

Perennial herb, somewhat lax to erect, to 2' tall. Leaves lance-shaped, arranged in whorls widely spaced along stem. Flowers bell-shaped, about 1.5" long, with 6 brown to purplish-black petals. Fruit a dry pod. Roots look like a dense ball of rice. Common in upper beach meadows. Sea level to subalpine. Also called rice root, Indian rice or black lily.



Goose tongue

Plantago maritima

Perennial herb, erect to 10" tall, leaves and flowering stems arising from base of plant. Leaves very narrow and extremely fleshy, toughening with age. Flowers, tiny, numerous, green, crowded onto upper part of flowering stems. Abundant along maritime beaches, growing in cracks in rocks and among gravel. Spring leaves can be cooked as a vegetable.



Green false hellebore

Veratrum viride

Perennial herb, erect to 6' tall. Looks like a corn plant. Leaves oval with smooth margins, pointed ends, to 1' long, with parallel veins. Flowers, bell to star-shaped, about 1/2" across, with 6 green petals, in dense drooping clusters at the top of the plant. Occasional in meadows from sea level to subalpine, common in subalpine meadows. Extremely poisonous.



BLUE

BROWN

GREEN



Wildflowers of the National Forests in Alaska highlights 50 of the most common wildflowers found in Alaska's two National Forests, the Tongass National Forest and the Chugach National Forest.

The Tongass covers most of southeastern Alaska, and the Chugach surrounds Prince William Sound. Unless otherwise noted, plants discussed here occur throughout our area of interest (Kenai Peninsula through the southern Panhandle).

This brochure was prepared by the Forest Service Alaska Region Botany Program. The program's mission is to foster conservation of native plants and plant communities on Alaska's National Forests.

Photographs provided by: Mary Stensvold, Rick Turner, Brad Kriekhaus, Karen Dillman, Ellen Anderson, Ernest Manewal, Jay VerHoef and the USDA Forest Service Alaska Region collection.

Cover photograph: Woolly geranium (described inside) and Kamchatka rhododendron (described below) on a lushly vegetated rock bluff.

Kamchatka rhododendron
Therorhodion camtschaticum

Deciduous shrub, spreading, to 10" tall. Leaves oval to spoon-shaped, about 1 1/2" long, hairs on margins and undersides. Showy flowers about 1" long, solitary, with 5 magenta petals. Fruit a hairy capsule. Grows in heaths and meadows from sea level to alpine. Occasional from Kruzof Island near Sitka to northeastern Asia, becoming more common farther west.

