

## FRIENDS OF THE CHICAGO RIVER

## Plants of the Chicago River Watershed



**Virginia Waterleaf** **F**  
*Hydrophyllum virginianum* *White flowers*  
 The leaves of the waterleaf often have whitish mottling, as if they have water stains -- hence the name "waterleaf." It likes to grow in moist woodlands.  
 Dan Busemeyer, Illinois Natural History Survey



**Shagbark Hickory** **F**  
*Carya ovata* *70-80 feet tall*  
 Shagbark hickory is named so because it has distinctive shaggy bark. The sweet nuts, once a staple food for Native Americans, provide food for wildlife.  
 Dan Busemeyer, Illinois Natural History Survey



**Virginia Bluebells** **F**  
*Mertensia virginica* *Purple flowers*  
 The sight of a group of Virginia bluebells is truly amazing as the color of the flowers is incredibly bright! Bluebells are more abundant in high elevation, dry areas.  
 Dan Busemeyer, Illinois Natural History Survey



**Jack-in-the-Pulpit** **F**  
*Arisaema atropurpureum*  
 This plant was named so because its flower looks like a pulpit with a little preacher standing at it. Prefers growing in moist woods and swampy areas.  
 Dan Busemeyer, Illinois Natural History Survey



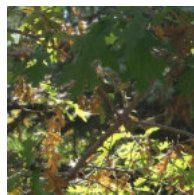
**Black Cherry** **F**  
*Prunus serotina* *50-60 feet tall*  
 The leaves and inner bark of this tall, slender tree contain a cyanide compound that was used in cough medicines. The cherries are edible, if somewhat bitter.  
 Dan Busemeyer, Illinois Natural History Survey



**False Nettle** **F**  
*Boehmeria cylindrica* *Pale green flowers*  
 This plant has small greenish flower clusters around the stem. The flowers and leaves resemble those of stinging nettle, but this plant lacks the stinging barbs.  
 Dan Busemeyer, Illinois Natural History Survey



**Wild Red Columbine** **F**  
*Aquilegia canadensis* *Red flowers*  
 Columbine is also known as rock bells as it grows on rocky woods and slopes. In Italian "Aquila" means "Eagle" because of the talon shaped spurs of the petals.  
 Dan Busemeyer, Illinois Natural History Survey



**Northern Red Oak** **F**  
*Quercus rubra* *60-70 feet tall*  
 A magnificent tree is found on lower slopes with a northerly or easterly aspect. Its acorns are very bitter and not preferred by squirrels because of the tannins in them.  
 J.S. Peterson @ USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database



**Dutchman's Breeches** **F**  
*Dicentra cucullaria* *White flowers*  
 The flowers of this plant look like little pairs of old-fashioned pants (breeches). It has a short growing season and prefers north-facing slopes and ravines along streams.  
 Dan Busemeyer, Illinois Natural History Survey



**Eastern Redbud** **F**  
*Cercis canadensis* *20-30 feet tall*  
 Redbud trees have redish-purple flowers in the early spring. Twigs from this tree were used to smoke and season venison and opossum, giving it the name "spicewood."  
 J.S. Peterson @ USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database



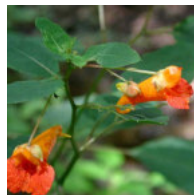
**Virginia Wild Rye Grass** **F**  
*Elymus virginicus*  
 Virginia wild rye is very palatable and nutritious, and is readily eaten by livestock when it's green. It grows well in shaded, wooded, or riparian areas.  
 Dan Busemeyer, Illinois Natural History Survey



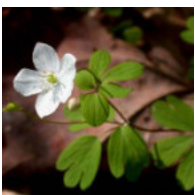
**False Solomon's Seal** **F**  
*Smilacina racemosa* *White flowers*  
 Cluster of flowers at the end of the stalk distinguishes this plant from "true" Solomon's seal, which has flowers along the stem that hang underneath the plant.  
 Dan Busemeyer, Illinois Natural History Survey



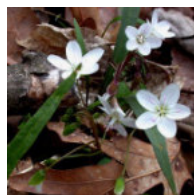
**Mayapple** **F**  
*Podophyllum peltatum* *White flowers*  
 The leaves of the Mayapple look like small umbrellas blanketing the woodland in spring. Native Americans used it to treat warts and other skin growths.  
 Dan Busemeyer, Illinois Natural History Survey



**Spotted Jewelweed** **F**  
*Impatiens capensis* *Orange flowers*  
 This plant is also known as touch-me-not as it shoots its ripe seeds when touched. The leaves, when crushed, produce a juice that relieves the itch of poison ivy.  
 Dan Busemeyer, Illinois Natural History Survey



**False Rue Anemone** **F**  
*Enemion biternatum*  
 Grows in moist deciduous woods in valleys, floodplains, ravine bottoms, and occasionally in open pastures. The nectar of the flowers attracts small bees and flies.  
 Dan Busemeyer, Illinois Natural History Survey



**Spring Beauty** **F**  
*Claytonia virginica* *White flowers*  
 This early bloomer's flowers open up on sunny days and close during cloudy weather or at night. They face upward when open, but nod downward when closed.  
 Dan Busemeyer, Illinois Natural History Survey

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**Smooth Sumac** **F**  
*Rhus glabra* *20-25 feet tall*  
 Similar to Staghorn sumac, but smaller with smooth branches. This shrub (or small tree) has a short or multi-stemmed trunk and wide spreading, open crown.  
 Dan Busemeyer, Illinois Natural History Survey



**Chicory** **X-NN**  
*Cichorium intybus* *Purple flowers*  
 Chicory was brought over to the US by the Europeans. It was used as a flavoring for coffee. It is almost always only found on roadsides and abandoned lots.  
 Dan Busemeyer, Illinois Natural History Survey



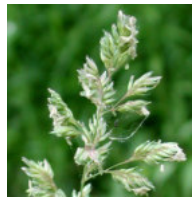
**Staghorn Sumac** **F**  
*Rhus typhina* *20-25 feet tall*  
 The fruits of this tree are dry, red-hairy drupes and have been known to last through winter into the spring. The twigs give off a milky sap when crushed.  
 Dan Busemeyer, Illinois Natural History Survey



**Wild Parsnip** **X-NN**  
*Pastinaca sativa* *Yellow flowers*  
 Wild parsnip is mostly found on roadsides in abundance. When you touch it has a chemical inside that reacts with sunlight and forms huge yellow blisters on the skin.  
 Dan Busemeyer, Illinois Natural History Survey



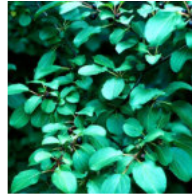
**Cut-leaved Toothwort** **F**  
*Cardamine concatenata* *White flowers*  
 The leaves are long, deeply dissected into five segments like fingers on a hand with large "teeth" on the margins. The white flowers grow above the plant in a spike.  
 Dan Busemeyer, Illinois Natural History Survey



**Kentucky Bluegrass** **X-NN**  
*Poa pratensis*  
 Kentucky bluegrass is the grass that most of us use for lawns. It often escapes cultivation but is not a very problematic invader in prairies and meadows.  
 Dan Busemeyer, Illinois Natural History Survey



**Red Trillium** **F**  
*Trillium erectum* *Red flowers*  
 This plant is also known as the wake-robin for its red flowers, heralding spring. The flowers have the very -unspringlike smell of rotting meat, and are pollinated by flies.  
 Dan Busemeyer, Illinois Natural History Survey



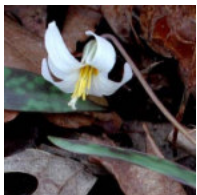
**European Buckthorn** **I-NN**  
*Rhamnus cathartica* *20-30 feet tall*  
 European buckthorn invades prairies, savannas, woodlands and floodplain forests. It produces purple berries that are cathartic (*accelerating* defecation) in birds.  
 John M. Randall, The Nature Conservancy



**White Trillium** **F**  
*Trillium grandiflorum* *White flowers*  
 This wildflower is often most common on steep slopes where it is protected from grazing white-tailed deer (which dislike grazing on inclines).  
 Jim Stasz @ USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database



**Garlic Mustard** **I-NN**  
*Alliaria petiolata* *White flowers*  
 This plant is the scourge of our woodlands and savannas, taking over aggressively and displacing many native species. It was brought from Europe as a cooking herb.  
 Dan Busemeyer, Illinois Natural History Survey



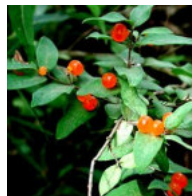
**Trout Lily** **F**  
*Erythronium albidum* *White flowers*  
 The trout lily has spotted or mottled leaves. This wildflower is a good indicator that spring has arrived, as it is one of the first to poke its head up to bloom.  
 Dan Busemeyer, Illinois Natural History Survey



**Ground Ivy** **I-NN**  
*Glechoma hederacea* *Purple flowers*  
 Ground ivy, or Creeping Charlie, is a common weed in gardens and floodplain forests and has a very strong smell. It grows to form dense mats.  
 Dan Busemeyer, Illinois Natural History Survey



**Common Blue Violet** **F**  
*Viola sororia* *Purple flowers*  
 The violet has broad, heart-shaped leaves with flowers and leaves on separate stems that arise from the roots. The flowers do not stand much above the leaves.  
 Dan Busemeyer, Illinois Natural History Survey



**Tartarian Honeysuckle** **I-NN**  
*Lonicera tartarica* *Red berries*  
 Tartarian honeysuckle is a shrub that is often used as a landscape plant. It has escaped to become an invader in our prairies, savannas and woodlands.  
 Dan Busemeyer, Illinois Natural History Survey



**Black Walnut** **F**  
*Juglans nigra* *70-100 feet tall*  
 The seed, or nut, of the black walnut is encased in a smelly yellow husk. This foul smell discourages most animals from eating them, but not the squirrel.  
 Dan Busemeyer, Illinois Natural History Survey



**Nightshade** **I-NN**  
*Solanum dulcamara* *Purple flowers*  
 "Bittersweet" or woody nightshade if found in shady areas and is a poisonous member of the tomato family. The berries are eaten by birds, which then disperse the seeds.  
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