

Prairie Fen Companion *Plant facts*

American skunk cabbage

Symplocarpus foetidus



C=8

Color: yellow

Irregular flower

Plant type: Flowering perennial

Bloom period: April-May

Distinguishing characteristics: Plant has a cluster of yellow flowers inside a purplish-brown and green mottled hood that is 2-5 inches long. Leaves unfold after the plant blooms in early spring, and are very large and egg-shaped, with a heart-shaped base and unpleasant odor when crushed. Some leaves persist into August when this species grows in the shade, but leaves wither in early summer if the plant is in a warmer, sunny location. Plants grow 6 inches to 2 feet tall.

Habitat quality: This species tolerates dense shade and is very common in the understory beneath glossy buckthorn. It becomes much less common after shrub clearing.

Where can I find this plant?



MICHIGAN STATE
UNIVERSITY



Michigan
Natural
Features
Inventory

The Nature
Conservancy
Protecting nature. Preserving life.



The Stewardship Network

Developed by: Doug Landis and Anna Fiedler, MSU Department of Entomology. Funding support: National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Lynn and Thelma MacCready Forest and Wildlife Endowment, MSU, and Hanes Trust of the Michigan Botanical Club. Partners: The Nature Conservancy, Michigan Natural Features Inventory, The Stewardship Network, Michigan DNR Landowner Incentive Program. For more information on native plants and prairie fens, go to www.nativeplants.msu.edu.

Where can I find this plant?



Indiana



New York



Ohio



Wisconsin

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Key description

C=

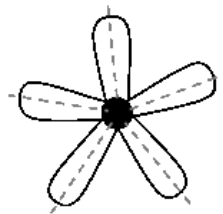
Coefficient of conservatism. This is a value that ranges from 0 for non-native invasives to 10 for plants that would only be expected to be found in undisturbed, high quality plant communities. It is a general guideline for whether the plant would be likely to be found in an intact prairie fen (not filled in with shrubs and without invasive species). However, C values may be high for some species that are not found in prairie fen but would be part of another wetland such as a marsh. They are included here because they are a widely accepted measure of habitat quality in the Midwest (<http://1.usa.gov/FQAMethod>).

Flower type

Classifications here follow those of Newcomb's wildflower guide (<http://amzn.com/0316604429>).

Number of regular parts

The flower has this number of petals or petal-like parts that are symmetrical from the flower center (radial), with each similar to the other in shape, size, and color. There may be 3 to 7 regular parts. See image at right.



Aster

These flowers have regular parts and are symmetrical from the center, but there are more than 7. Asters have a set of disc flowers in the center of the flower and a set of ray flowers outside of the disc flowers, often called petals. They are one group (genus) within the family Asteraceae, and there are many species in this genus.

Flowers not readily obvious

The flowers of plants such as grasses, sedges, and cattail are not obvious and are often confused with the fruits (seeds) of these species. While this website does not include flower descriptions for these species, they do flower.

Irregular

The flower is not symmetrical from the center but is symmetrical down a line (bilateral). See image at right.



No flowers

A number of primitive plants, including ferns, do not flower but make spores in order to reproduce.

Parts indistinguishable

These species either have parts so small their number is difficult to determine or have no petal-like parts. This group includes goldenrods, other species with small individual flowers, and plants in the family Asteraceae that have more than 7 parts, but the parts do not form distinguishable, symmetrical ray flowers (which are often called petals).