Saxifragaceae ~ Saxifrage Family

The saxifrage family consists of mostly perennial herbs with simple, palmately veined leaves—mainly basal but sometimes arranged alternately on the stem—with panicles of small flowers usually on a separate stalk. Flowers almost always have 5 separate petals, 5 sepals, and 5 or 10 stamens. The ovary usually has 2 carpels and pistils and may be inferior, superior, or in-between and can be a good field mark to distinguish similar species. The flower parts are attached to a cup (hypanthium) and may appear tube-like because of fused sepals. The numerous seeds are usually in a capsule. This large family favors cool climates and is well represented in the Cascades, especially in shady habitats. It would be difficult to find a stretch of forest without at least a few representatives of Saxifragaceae. The Latin name Saxifraga means “rock breaking” and there are quite a few rock lovers as well. Many species make good garden plants. Non-native species commonly cultivated include Bergenia, Astilbe, and Coralbells (Heuchera sanguinea). Two related families, Grossulariaceae and Parnassiaceae, were formerly included in Saxifragaceae.

**SMALL-FLOWERED PRAIRIE-STAR**
Lithophragma parviflorum

perennial • 4–16” (10–40 cm)
rocky or grassy slopes
early: May to June

The deeply cut petals and leaves of the prairie-stars (also called woodland-star and fringe cup) make this an easy genus to recognize. Telling the species apart is not quite so simple. Small-flowered prairie-star is the most common species in the Cascades. Its petals are white to pale pink and generally divided into 3 lobes. The 3-beaked ovary is mostly inferior. The pubescent calyx has 5 triangular lobes and is often purple. It is longer than wide, tapering gradually to the base, somewhat like a vase. The glandular hairy leaves are deeply cut into 3 to 5 palmate segments, then further divided into another 2 or 3 lobes. Most of the leaves are basal but there may be a few smaller leaves on the stem.

Smooth prairie-star (L. glabrum) is seen infrequently in our area. It has a shorter, cup-shaped calyx tube with an abruptly rounded base and shallow lobes, and 5 narrower petal lobes that tend to be pink. Its leaves are usually glabrous and may have little red bulbls in the leaf axils. The stems are red. It is generally a more delicate plant and, despite the name, has smaller flowers than small-flowered prairie-star.

Small-flowered prairie-star is found throughout Oregon and across much of the west. You can see this dainty perennial at Youngs Rock, Buck Canyon, Tire Mountain, Bachelor Mountain, and Castle Rock. Smooth prairie-star is more common east of the Cascades but can be seen at McCord Creek Falls and Cone Peak.
RUSTYHAIR SAXIFRAGE  
*Micranthes rufidula*  
(*Saxifraga occidentalis* var. *rufidula*)

perennial • 4–8” (10–20 cm)  
rocky seeps, cliffs  
early to middle: May to June

Rustyhair saxifrage is a small perennial of very rocky places, its numerous fleshy rosettes often filling cracks on moist mossy cliffs and outcrops. The leaves are somewhat oval with scalloped edges and a wedge-shaped base tapering to a short petiole. They are shiny above with reddish hairs underneath; the oldest ones are often bright red. They shrivel up in summer drought, but amazingly fall rains green them up again. Held up by a gland-covered stem is a flat-topped panicle of clear white, 5-petaled flowers with 2-parted, mostly superior ovaries that turn red as they ripen.

Rustyhair saxifrage is limited to mountains mainly west of the Cascade crest from southern British Columbia to northern California. Illahee Rock, Tire Mountain, Castle Rock, Cone Peak, and Bearbones are all great places to see this beauty.

OREGON SAXIFRAGE  
*Micranthes oregana*  
(*Saxifraga oregana*)

perennial • 10–36” (25–90 cm)  
bogs, wet meadows  
middle: June to July

This robust, coarse perennial has rosettes of oblong to spoon-shaped basal leaves 2–6” long which taper gradually at the base, unlike the similar but smaller grassland saxifrage that has distinct petioles. The leafless flowering stem is softly hairy, becoming glandular toward the top. The inflorescence is generally a tight, elongated panicle but may be more open. Each flower has 5 white, somewhat irregular, oval petals at the edge of a broad green half superior ovary with 2 short beak-like styles.

Oregon saxifrage ranges from Washington to California and east to Montana and Colorado. It is found in wet meadows at all elevations and can be seen occasionally in the Western Cascades. Look for it at Groundhog Mountain, Echo Basin, Bruno Meadows, Carpenter Mountain, and Buck Canyon.

GRASSLAND SAXIFRAGE  
*Micranthes* (*Saxifraga*) *integrigolia*

perennial • 6–18” (15–45 cm)  
vernally moist meadows, rocky seeps  
middle: May to July

The fleshy leaves of grassland saxifrage are more-or-less ovate and taper abruptly to a petiole not quite as long as the leaf blade. They are fleshy and entire or with small teeth. The small rosettes often grow tightly packed in large colonies in moist areas. The white flowers resemble those of Oregon saxifrage with 5 oval petals and shorter reflexed sepals attached at the side of the ovary, but the inflorescence may be more open. Swamp saxifrage (*S. nidifica*) is very similar and may be seen in our area. It differs mainly in having a petiole longer than the leaf blade.

Grassland saxifrage occurs from southern British Columbia east to Montana and south across most of Oregon to California. It is fairly common at low to middle elevations and can be found at Youngs Rock, Tire Mountain, Cone Peak, and Fish Creek.

RUSTY SAXIFRAGE  
*Micranthes* (*Saxifraga*) *ferruginea*

The narrow, toothed leaves of rusty saxifrage tend to be sparsely hairy with more hairs along the leaf edge. They taper at the base without a noticeable petiole and are arranged in tight rosettes. The 5 unequal petals of the small white flowers narrow abruptly to a thin claw; the 3 largest have a pair of yellow spots. They are in airy panicles on glandular stems. The 2-parted superior ovaries start out white but turn green and then red as they mature. In the Western Cascades, and elsewhere mainly in the southern part of its range, tiny plantlets replace many of the flowers. This quick method of reproductions often results in dense patches of rosettes.

Rusty saxifrage is found in mountains from northern California to Alaska, east to Alberta and northwestern Montana. Usually limited to small areas on any trail, look for it at Mt. June, Table Rock, Blair Lake, Abbott Butte, and Whitehorse Meadows.

OREGON SAXIFRAGE  
*Micranthes* (*Saxifraga*) *oregana*

perennial • 10–36” (25–90 cm)  
bogs, wet meadows  
middle: June to July

This robust, coarse perennial has rosettes of oblong to spoon-shaped basal leaves 2–6” long which taper gradually at the base, unlike the similar but smaller grassland saxifrage that has distinct petioles. The leafless flowering stem is softly hairy, becoming glandular toward the top. The inflorescence is generally a tight, elongated panicle but may be more open. Each flower has 5 white, somewhat irregular, oval petals at the edge of a broad green half superior ovary with 2 short beak-like styles.

Oregon saxifrage ranges from Washington to California and east to Montana and Colorado. It is found in wet meadows at all elevations and can be seen occasionally in the Western Cascades. Look for it at Groundhog Mountain, Echo Basin, Bruno Meadows, Carpenter Mountain, and Buck Canyon.
**BROOK SAXIFRAGE**  
*Micranthes odontoloma*  
(*Saxifraga arguta*)

**WOOD SAXIFRAGE**  
*Saxifraga mertensiana*

**MATTED SAXIFRAGE**  
*Saxifraga bronchialis*

**TUFTED SAXIFRAGE**  
*Saxifraga caespitosa*

**SAXIFRAGE FAMILY**
**BREWER’S MITREWORT**  
*Mitella brèweri*

Like many species in the Saxifrage family, mitreworts are generally moisture- and shade-loving perennials with large, palmate, basal leaves on long petioles and racemes of small flowers. But take a closer look at their flowers. The delicate beauty of their unique antenna-like petals is missed by those who fail to examine them up close. Brewer’s mitrewort has shiny, round, toothed leaves that tend to curl up into a funnel shape. Its saucer-shaped, chartreuse flowers have 5 feathery petals and 5 triangular calyx lobes. Little black seeds sit in the open saucer following the bloom. This rhizomatous mitrewort enjoys moisture from melting snow and is frequently found in large spreads in subalpine meadows and moist forests.

Brewer’s mitrewort is found in the mountains of British Columbia south to California and east to Alberta and Montana. It is quite common above 5000’ in the Cascades anywhere there is reliable snowpack. It is abundant at Hemlock Lake, Moon Point, Cache Meadows, and Whetstone Mountain.

**ALPINE MITREWORT**  
*Mitella pentándra*

Alpine mitrewort could be called our “showiest” mitrewort. Its yellow-green, pinnately dissected petals are frequently set off by deep red coloring inside the dish-shaped calyx. This makes it easy to see that the 5 stamens are opposite the petals—in all our other species they are opposite the sepals. The flowers are in tall racemes with long pedicels. The leaves are more deeply lobed with a more obvious leaf tip than Brewer’s mitrewort. Occasionally there is one small leaf on the flower stalk.

The widely distributed alpine mitrewort ranges from Alaska to California and east to the Rocky mountains. In Oregon, it grows at low to high elevations, mainly in the Cascade and Blue mountains. Look for it in very wet spots at Hemlock Lake, Whetstone Mountain, Crescent Mountain, Table Rock, and Bruno Meadows.

**OVAL-LEAF MITREWORT**  
*Mitella ovális*

The oval leaves, noticeably longer than wide, are the easiest way to recognize this little perennial. They have rounded primary and secondary lobes and are sparsely covered with stiff, perpendicular hairs. The stems are hairy as well. The ¼” green flowers are smaller than our other species. The 5 triangular calyx lobes form a pentagon. In between are short petals with only a couple of pairs of lateral lobes. Like our other green-flowered species, oval-leaf mitrewort is rhizomatous and can form large patches in moist areas.

Oval-leaf mitrewort occurs from the Pacific Coast up into the Cascades, from British Columbia south to northern California. Whetstone Mountain and Gordon Meadows are excellent places to see this growing along with almost all our other mitreworts.

**LEAFY MITREWORT**  
*Mitella caulféscens*

Leafy mitrewort gets its common and specific names from the 1 to 3 small cauline leaves on the flowering stem. This distinguishes it from our other green-flowered species. Another unique trait is that it blooms from the top down. Its flowers are green with purple at the base of the feathery petals and on the filaments which hold its white anthers above the triangular lobes of the calyx. Its maple-like leaves have deep, angled lobes.

Leafy mitrewort is found from southern British Columbia to northern California and western Montana. By and large it is restricted to the west side of the Cascades at low to middle elevations. McCord Creek Falls, Whetstone Mountain, Rattlesnake Mountain, Moon Point, Mt. June, and Gordon Meadows are a few places it can be seen.
THREE-TOOTHED MITREWORT
Mitella trifida
perennial • 6–16” (15–40 cm)
woods
early: May to June
These next 2 species are easy to tell from our other mitreworts by their white flowers and preference for drier habitat. They can, however, be very difficult to tell from each other and may grow together. Three-toothed mitrewort has clumps of round to heart-shaped, scalloped-edged leaves on long petioles. Up to 20 small flowers on very short pedicels are arrayed mostly on the same side of each of several leafless flowering stalks. The delicate flowers have a wide, cup-shaped green calyx and 5 white petal-like lobes that alternate with 5 slender 3-pronged petals. The entire plant is sparsely hairy.

Three-toothed mitrewort is found from Alaska to California, east to Alberta and Montana. In Oregon, it occurs primarily in the Western Cascades where occasional individuals or small groups can be seen on most woodland trails. Keep your eyes open for this dainty plant at Cone Peak and Lowder, Bearbones, Lookout, and Tire mountains.

ANGLE-LEAVED MITREWORT
Mitella diversifolia
perennial • 6–18” (15–45 cm)
woods
early: mid-June to early July
Angle-leaved mitrewort is most easily differentiated from three-tooth mitrewort by its strongly angled, pentagonal or maple-like leaves. These have several blunt-tipped lobes but otherwise have relatively smooth edges and, like all mitreworts, a heart-shaped base. The flowering stem often has one very small leaf. The flowers are nearly identical to three-tooth mitrewort but for the slightly longer and more funnel-shaped calyx.

Angle-leaved mitrewort is much less common than the previous species. It is found only occasionally from northern California through the Cascades to limited areas of Washington, Idaho, and Montana. It is mainly seen in the Western Cascades at lower elevation sites such as Youngs Rock, Hecketooth, Big Squaw, and Bearbones mountains, Watson Falls, and the Alpine Trail.

FRINGECUP
Tellima grandiflora
perennial • 1–3’ (30–90 cm)
moist woods and thickets
middle: June, streambanks
The name fringecup comes from the wide, cup-like green calyx and the 5 fringed petals of its flowers. Although the plants that grow in the Columbia Gorge have large bright white flowers, ours have much smaller blooms that always open pale green and age to magenta. Numerous racemes of these pretty flowers rise well above the long-petioled, maple-like basal leaves. There are also several smaller, short-petioled leaves on the flowering stalks. Both leaves and stems are covered with bristly hairs. It makes an easy and subtly attractive perennial for a woodland garden where it self-sows prolifically.

Fringecup occurs from Alaska through western Oregon to northern California and ranges inland across northern Idaho just into Montana. It is a frequent inhabitant of moist sites from sea level to moderate elevations in the Cascades. It can be seen on most trails but is especially abundant at Crescent Mountain, Table Rock, Lowder Mountain, Moon Point, and Quaking Aspen Swamp.

PIGGY-BACK PLANT
Tolmiea menziesii
perennial • 1–2’ (30–60 cm)
moist woods and thickets
middle: June to early July
The common names, another being youth-on-age, refer to this species’ unusual propagation method of forming a small plantlet at the base of a basal leaf blade in the fall. The leaf roots when it touches the soil. Eventually continuous patches are formed. The long, reddish calyx of its unique flower has 3 large lobes on top and 2 smaller ones below. The 4 deep red, thread-like petals are curved back. The large basal and smaller stem leaves are maple-like and hairy; similar to but more sharply lobed and elongated than fringecup.

Piggy-back plant is found in the moist western parts of the Pacific states from Alaska to northern California. It is common throughout western Oregon. It grows abundantly by the trails at Echo Basin, McCord Creek Falls, Horsepasture and Olallie mountains, and Monument Peak.
**TALL ALUMROOT**
*Heuchera chlorantha*

- **Perennial** • 16–40” (40–100 cm)
- **Meadows, seeps, roadsides**
- **Middle: June, streambanks**

This species, also known as green-flowered or meadow alumroot, differs from our 2 more common alumroots by its dense, spike-like panicle of greenish cup-shaped flowers perched atop a very tall, hairy, leafless stem. Fresh hairs are white but dry to brown. There may be 5 tiny white to greenish yellow petals tucked in the fuzzy, 5-lobed, greenish calyx or they may be missing altogether. The stamens are also shorter than the calyx. Beneath each flower is a long narrow bract. The leaves have 5–9 shallow, rounded lobes and are usually a little wider than long.

Tall alumroot is an uncommon plant that occurs from British Columbia south just into the northwestern corner of California and east into Idaho. It is found mainly in western Oregon and along the Cascades on both sides. There are large patches of it along the roads near Park Creek Basin and Hell’s Half Acre.

**SMALL-FLOWERED ALUMROOT**
*Heuchera micrantha*

- **Perennial** • 8–24” (20–60 cm)
- **Shady cliffs, rocky slopes, moist woods**
- **Early: mid-June to early July**

The leaves of small-flowered alumroot are fairly round with a heart-shaped base and have 5–7 shallow, rounded lobes edged with small sharp teeth. They vary quite a bit from shiny to somewhat hairy and are in basal clumps on long petioles covered with white hairs that turn brown with age. Their flowers have a white to pinkish, hairy, bell-shaped calyx with 5 short, rounded lobes, 5 narrow petals that tend to curl back, and 5 prominently exserted stamens with orange anthers. They are held in large, frothy, open panicles on long glandular red stems. The ovary is mostly inferior. The 2-parted capsule that develops contains many tiny oval spiny seeds.

Small-flowered alumroot occurs from California to British Columbia, mainly west of the Cascade Crest. It is common in the Western Cascades. Large populations are found at Mt. June, Bearbones Mountain, Castle Rock, and Tire Mountain.

**SMOOTH ALUMROOT**
*Heuchera glabra*

- **Perennial** • 4–24” (10–60 cm)
- **Cool moist cliffs, talus slopes**
- **Middle: June to early July**

This species may be confused with (and may hybridize with) the more common small-flowered alumroot, but it has deeper, more sharply pointed leaf lobes and hairless petioles. Its tiny white flowers have a fuzzy, more conical-shaped calyx but are arranged in a similar open panicle. The spiny seeds are narrow and slightly curved.

Also known as alpine heuchera, it ranges from Alaska through British Columbia to Alberta, Washington and western Oregon. In Oregon, it is usually restricted to cool sites at higher elevations than small-flowered alumroot. Not very common in our area, it grows on the north-facing cliffs at Three Pyramids, Table Rock, and Tidbits.
**Scrophulariaceae ~ Figwort Family**

This family, formerly well-represented in the Western Cascades, has been left depauperate due to recent reordering. Common plants including penstemons and speedwells are now in Plantaginaceae, paintbrushes and owlclovers are in Orobanchaceae, and monkeyflowers are in Phrymaceae. Left are figworts themselves in our area and a few other genera with opposite leaves and 2-lipped, tubular flowers with 4 stamens and a sterile staminode. Common garden plants include butterfly bush (Buddleia spp.).

**LANCELEAF FIGWORT**

*Scrophularia lanceolata*

perennial • 2–5’ (60–150 cm)
moist, open or disturbed areas
middle: June to July

This deciduous perennial has numerous small green to reddish pouch-like flowers in whorls at the top of a tall square stem. The prominent, green, fan-shaped staminode rests against the 2-lobed upper lip. The leaves are lance-shaped to triangular and strongly toothed. The fruit is a capsule. The similar Oregon figwort (*S. oregana*) has deep red flowers and a narrow red staminode.

Seldom seen in the Western Cascades, figworts turn up occasionally in damp lower elevation sites in the northern part of our area. Lanceleaf figwort is found mainly east of the Cascades across much of the US and Canada. Oregon figwort occurs mainly along the coast north into Washington.

**Urticaceae ~ Nettle Family**

The Nettle family consists of herbs, shrubs, vines and trees that are monoecious or dioecious with small wind-pollinated flowers. Most have stinging hairs that inject chemicals including histamines and formic acid, the same substance in ant bites. The simple leaves may be alternate or opposite and usually have stipules. While the family is distributed worldwide, stinging nettle is the only native member found in Oregon.

**STINGING NETTLE**

*Urtica dioica*

perennial • 3–10’ (1–3 m)
moist woods, wetlands, ditches
middle: June to July

This rhizomatous perennial has dangling clusters of tiny pale flowers in the leaf axils. Male and female flowers are on the same plant in our subspecies (*gracilis*). The pairs of opposite, ovate to cordate, sawtoothed leaves are on long petioles. The stinging hairs should be avoided, but the pain is temporary. While seemingly weedy, nettle is edible, medicinal, a source of fabric fiber, and a valuable host plant for several butterfly species.

Stinging nettle is native to Europe, Asia, and much of North America. It has also been introduced outside of its native range. It is uncommon in the Western Cascades but can be found at Buck Canyon, Hershberger and Heckletooth mountains, and McCord Creek Falls.

**SLENDER BOYKINIA**

*Boykinia occidentalis* (B. elata)

Like so many of our woodland members of the Saxifrage family, slender boykinia has maple-like leaves. These are under 3” with sharp teeth. The many basal leaves are on long petioles, those on the stem diminish in size and become sessile near the top. The small, white, 5-petaled flowers are in delicate open sprays at the top of a slender stem covered with red glandular hairs. Both glandular and non-glandular hairs may be present on the non-flowering stems. Brownish bristle-like stipules are present at the base of the leaf stalks.

Slender boykinia, also known as coast boykinia, is found from the coast up to middle elevations in the Cascades, and south to California and north to British Columbia. Small wet spots are a good place to look for this pretty perennial at Castle Rock, Tidbits, Mt. June, and Hemlock Lake.

**BOYKINIA MAJOR**

*Boykinia major*

perennial • 1–3’ (30–90 cm)
wet woods and thickets, streambanks
late: mid-July to mid-August

Mountain boykinia is a handsome perennial whose 5-petaled white flowers are clustered in a dense panicle. Its leaves are deeply cleft into 3 or 5 major lobes which broaden toward the leaf’s edge and are further divided into shallow lobes and sharp teeth. It also has large leaf-like stipules. The leaves of false bugbane (see p. ??), which favors the same habitat, can be confused with those of mountain boykinia but have lobes that become narrower toward the tips, like a typical maple.

Mountain boykinia has a fairly limited range from northern California through western Oregon and east into small sections of Idaho and Montana. It is relatively common in shady, wet spots in the Western Cascades. Look for it at Gordon Meadows, Crescent Mountain, Bruno Meadows, Table Rock, and Buck Canyon.

**COLUMBIA. SMALL WET SPOTS ARE A GOOD HABITAT FOR**

Hemlock Lake.

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**Urtica dioica**

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Stinging nettle is native to Europe, Asia, and much of North America. It has also been introduced outside of its native range. It is uncommon in the Western Cascades but can be found at Buck Canyon, Hershberger and Heckletooth mountains, and McCord Creek Falls.

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Slender boykinia, also known as coast boykinia, is found from the coast up to middle elevations in the Cascades, and south to California and north to British Columbia. Small wet spots are a good place to look for this pretty perennial at Castle Rock, Tidbits, Mt. June, and Hemlock Lake.

**BOYKINIA MAJOR**

*Boykinia major*

perennial • 1–3’ (30–90 cm)
wet woods and thickets, streambanks
late: mid-July to mid-August

Mountain boykinia is a handsome perennial whose 5-petaled white flowers are clustered in a dense panicle. Its leaves are deeply cleft into 3 or 5 major lobes which broaden toward the leaf’s edge and are further divided into shallow lobes and sharp teeth. It also has large leaf-like stipules. The leaves of false bugbane (see p. ??), which favors the same habitat, can be confused with those of mountain boykinia but have lobes that become narrower toward the tips, like a typical maple.

Mountain boykinia has a fairly limited range from northern California through western Oregon and east into small sections of Idaho and Montana. It is relatively common in shady, wet spots in the Western Cascades. Look for it at Gordon Meadows, Crescent Mountain, Bruno Meadows, Table Rock, and Buck Canyon.
Valerianaceae ~ Valerian Family

Most members of the Valerian family (and all of ours) have clusters of small, bilaterally symmetric, tubular flowers with 5 lobes—favorites of butterflies. They are often strongly scented. The leaves are opposite and may be deeply lobed to compound. Jupiter’s beard (Centranthus ruber) and common valerian (Valeriana officinalis) are familiar garden plants that occasionally escape.

Scouler’s valerian (Valeriàna scoùleri) (V. sitchensis ssp. scouleri)
perennial • 6–27” (15–70 cm)
mist, rocky outcrops, woods, and roadsides
middle: May to June

Scouler’s valerian is still considered by some authorities to be a subspecies of Sitka valerian. While they look significantly different, the two species appear to intergrade where their ranges overlap at middle elevations. Whatever its official status is, Scouler’s valerian is a smaller plant with mostly basal compound leaves and only 1 or 2 pairs of stem leaves. These have fewer, rounded, entire leaflets. Its flowers are quite similar to those of Sitka valerian but are usually tinged with pink. In the Western Cascades it is most often found on cool, shaded, rocky areas.

Scouler’s valerian is found at low to middle elevations from British Columbia to California, mostly west of the mountains. Look for it in rocky spots at McCord Creek Falls, Illahee Rock, Castle Rock, and Bearbones, Tire, Lookout, and Whetstone mountains.

Sitka valerian (Valeriàna sitchénsis)
perennial • 1–4’ (30–120 cm)
mist, rocky outcrops and woods
middle: June to July

Butterflies love the strongly scented, compact heads of small white flowers that top the tall, leafy plants of Sitka valerian. Each flower has 3 exserted stamens and a calyx with many feathery bristles which persist on the single seed, allowing it to be spread by the breeze. Most of the leaves are on the stems. They are pinnately compound with 3–7, ovate to elliptical, coarsely toothed leaflets. Rhizomes allow this perennial to cover large patches of ground.

Sitka valerian ranges from California to Alaska and east to Alberta and Idaho. It is a common plant of subalpine meadows and woods in the Western Cascades above about 4000’. Moon Point, Olallie Mountain, Blair Lake, and Three Pyramids are some good places to see it.

Rosy plectritis, or sea blush as it is also known, is responsible for some of the most spectacular displays of spring color in the Cascade foothills. It is an annual of lower elevation seeps and vernaly wet meadows. The wetter the season, the better the bloom. The little tubular flowers have a short spur and vary from bright to lighter pink, but occasionally a pure white flower head turns up. The oval leaves are in opposite pairs with a short petiole, becoming sessile to clasping near the top. Large areas in bloom give off a noticeable scent.

Rosy plectritis ranges from British Columbia to California. It is common at low to middle elevations in western Oregon. Each June it blankets the meadows at Tire Mountain and Sawtooth Rock Meadow. It can also be seen at Big Squaw Mountain, Heckletooth Mountain, Castle Rock, and McCord Creek Falls.
Violaceae ~ Violet Family

Although worldwide this family has a number of other genera including trees, shrubs, and vines, in our area we have but one genus, *Viola*. All our violets are herbaceous perennials with flower parts in fives. The flowers are irregular with 2 petals facing up, 2 out, and 1 down. The lateral petals often have hairs at the base to brush pollen off of visiting insects. A backward-facing spur protrudes from the lowest petal. Each stamen has an unusual membrane surrounding the anther. The lowest 2 stamens have nectaries at their bases which extend into the spur where the nectar is collected. Dark veins on the lower petals lead insects to this sweet prize. Violet flowers look fairly similar but small differences in petal hairs, spur shapes, and the inflated style head can aid in identification. The leaves vary from heart-shaped to deeply lobed, and can be basal or alternate on the stem, and have a stipule at the base of the petiole. All violets are early bloomers, but later in the season many species produce a second type of flower—called cleistogamous—that self-pollinates without ever opening. This assures seed production since often there aren’t many insects out early when the showy flowers are blooming. Seeds are contained in a 3-parted capsule which, upon ripening, bursts open to scatter the seeds.

ROUND-LEAVED VIOLET
*Viola orbiculata*

*perennial • 2–6” (5–15 cm)*
*conifer forests*
*early: June*

As the name implies, the heart-shaped leaves of this species are very round. They are scalloped around the edges. Old leaves are often seen flattened on the ground from winter snow while fresh new leaves emerge upright in the center of the clump. The yellow flowers have strong red markings on the lower 3 petals, and often quite a bit of red in the stems and sepals. It spreads by rhizomes only.

Round-leaved violet is common at mid to high elevations in the Cascades and ranges north to British Columbia and east to Montana. You can see it at Tidbits, Patterson, and Lawder mountains.

EVERGREEN VIOLET
*Viola sempervirens*

*perennial • 1–5” (2–12 cm)*
*conifer forests*
*early: May to June*

Evergreen violet is very similar to round-leaved violet. Its leaves are much thicker, however, and the petal markings are finer, darker and much less prominent. Most distinctively, this species spreads by runners and can form large mats.

Evergreen violet is quite common throughout western Oregon from sea level to mid-montane. It is most easily recognized at lower elevation sites like Tire Mountain and Mt. June, where round-leaved violet does not occur.

**STREAM VIOLET**
*Viola glabella*

*perennial • 4–12” (10–30 cm)*
*moist woods, streambanks, wet meadows*
*early: May to June*

Like the majority of our species, stream violet is yellow, not violet-colored. It has purple markings at the base of the petals and a short spur. It is deciduous and spreads widely by stolons through moist areas of the forest. Its large, heart-shaped leaves are toothed along the edges and have sharply pointed tips. Unlike our other violets, in addition to basal leaves, there are leaves on the flowering stems.

Stream violet is found from British Columbia to California and east to Montana. This is our most common violet and is frequent throughout the Cascades and western Oregon. Large spreads can be seen at Twin Lakes, Wild Rose Point, Cache Meadows, and Moon Point.

**SHELTON’S VIOLET**
*Viola scheltonii*

*perennial • 2–6” (5–15 cm)*
*rocky meadows, outcrops, shady banks*
*very early: late May to June*

The most noticeable feature of this small violet is its leaves, which are parted into 3 and then further divided into deep rounded lobes. These frilly leaves easily differentiate Shelton’s violet from our other species, but out of bloom they might be confused with those of Menzies’ delphinium or steer’s head. Look for small, bud-like cleistogamous flowers or seed capsules. The petals are yellow on the front and suffused with red on the back; the lowest has dark veins at the base. Because of its early and sparse bloom, the main evidence of this violet is its leaves, which can often be seen creeping on short rhizomes along the base of rocks, or on the steep bank of a trail.

Shelton’s violet is found in the Pacific states. It is most common in southwestern Oregon but ranges up the Cascades with decreasing frequency. Get out early to see it at Castle Rock, Buck Creek, Heckletooth, Bearbones, and Tire mountains, Grizzly Peak, and Illahee Rock.
EARLY BLUE VIOLET
*Viola adunca*

Also known as western dog or long-spurred violet, this dark to pale purple flower’s most prominent feature is its **very long, narrow spur**, which reaches past the pedicel. The lateral petals have a thick tuft of white hairs and the lowest petal has dark veins. Showy flowers reappear occasionally in August. Flowers and leaves are on the same stem. The small leaves are both basal and cauline. They vary from ovate to somewhat heart-shaped and have a long-toothed, lance-shaped stipule at their base.

Early blue violet is common in much of the west, including Oregon, and across the northern states. It is abundant at Coffin Mountain, Blair Lake, Cache Meadows, Hawk Mountain, Bruno Meadows, Park Creek Basin, and Whitehorse Meadows.

MARSH VIOLET
*Viola palustris*

**Perennial • 3–6” (8–15 cm)**

wet meadows, marshes

**Early: June**

Marsh violet can be found hidden below taller plants in wet meadows, spreading by underground rhizomes and above-ground stolons. It has heart-shaped leaves and a few pale purple flowers with purple veins and a tuft of white hairs on the strongly curled lateral petals.

A widespread species, marsh violet occurs from the western states across the north to the East Coast and also Europe. It is occasional in the Cascades including at Echo Basin, Gordon Meadows, and Bruno Meadows.

BAKER’S VIOLET
*Viola bakeri*  
*(V. nuttallii var. bakeri)*

**Perennial • 2–6” (5–15 cm)**

meadows, open areas, forest openings

**Early: mid-June to early July**

The bright yellow flowers of Baker’s violet arise from a clump of **oblong-to-lanceolate leaves, which are usually pubescent and entire**. It is most commonly seen in meadows, blooming soon after snowmelt, before getting overtopped by taller plants. Upland yellow violet (*V. praemorsa*) is similar but has hairier, toothed leaves and reddish coloration on the back of the upper 2 petals and is found at low elevations.

Baker’s violet ranges from California to Washington. It occurs in Oregon at mid to high elevations in the Cascades north through Linn county. In June, hundreds of blooming plants fill Grasshopper Meadows. It can also be seen at Hershberger Mountain, Grizzly Peak, Olallie Mountain, Twin Lakes, Moon Point, and other meadow sites.

SMALL WHITE VIOLET
*Viola maclloskeyi*

**Perennial • 1–4” (2–10 cm)**

wet meadows, pond edges

**Early: June**

This little violet is the only truly white-flowered species likely to be found in the Cascades. The tiny flowers have purple marks on the lowest petal and a chartreuse flush and a few hairs on the lateral petals. It spreads by stolons in meadows where there is surface water in the spring.

Small white violet is found across much of the country. In Oregon, it grows at mid to high elevations, mainly in the Cascades. Look for it at Patterson Mountain, Quaking Aspen Swamp, Gordon Meadows, and Twin Lakes.

HOWELL’S VIOLET
*Viola howellii*

**Perennial • 3–8” (8–30 cm)**

forests, thickets

**Early: May**

Howell’s violet has large heart-shaped leaves, some on long petioles from the base and some on short petioles on the same stems as the lavender flowers. The lowest petal has fine markings and a broad spur; the lateral petals have white hairs.

Howell’s violet is found occasionally from southern British Columbia through western Oregon, mainly at low elevations. It grows at Youngs Rock, Heckletooth Mountain, and along the Alpine trail.

E violacea