

Wildflowers Driving Tour of the Skyway

FROM LATE MARCH TO EARLY JUNE TAKE A DRIVE THROUGH THE SKYWAY TO VIEW THE ARRAY OF WILDFLOWERS

Spring Beauty awaits you....

Come by the Cherochala Skyway Visitor Center before your next trip through the National Scenic Byway and grab a Wildflowers Driving Tour Field Guide to help you identify the native wildflowers along the skyway from the Cherokee National Forest to the Nantahala National Forest.

THE BEST DISPLAYS OF WILDFLOWERS ARE OFTEN IN THE FIRST FEW MILES OF THE HIGHER ELEVATIONS JUST OFF THE CHEROCHALA SKYWAY.

SPRING BEAUTY (*Claytonia caroliniana*)

Description: Six white petals streaked with pink veins which grow in clusters. With 5 deep pink stamens.

Fun Facts: Historically the tiny tubers of this flower have been gathered for food, leading to a reduced population. Which is why we consider the principles of Leave Not a Trace (LNT) highly important. We want to keep wildflowers such as Spring Beauty around for future generations. It is understandable why people can't keep their hands off these Spring Beauty tubers. They are sweet and full of potassium and vitamin A. As well as a good source of calcium and vitamin C. They can be eaten raw, boiled, fried, roasted, or mashed. They're good in stews or casseroles or cooked with peas like new potatoes. The young foliage and stems may also be eaten raw in salads or steamed and served as greens. The flowers make attractive edible garnishes, cheeses, and pâtés.

BLOODROOT (*Sanguinaria canadensis*)

Description: Shining white cup-shaped flower with eight-petals and bright yellow stamens in the center.

Fun Facts: The name Bloodroot also known as Red Root and Red Indian Paint comes from the ooze of red sap from a damaged root.

Cherokee Roots

The Cherokee used Bloodroot in several different ways for crafts and medicine. The red sap was used for dye in basket making and clothing. It was drunk as a tea to treat blood pressure, as well as made into a decoction for treating croup, coughs, and lung congestion. Roots were beaten into a salve and applied to the skin to help stop bleeding. It was also used to treat warts, ringworm, and as an insect repellent.

DWARF CRESTED IRIS (*Iris cristata*)

Description: It's blue-violet flowers are distinctly marked with a central yellow or white, purple striped band.

Fun Facts: The Iris is the Tennessee state flower. It symbolizes the spirit and strength of the people of Tennessee. As well as its resilience and ability to thrive in various environments. The state's natural beauty is represented by the vibrant colors of the Iris.

Cherokee Roots

The Cherokee drank tea made from the rhizomes of Iris for gastrointestinal problems. They also utilized a paste made from crushed rhizomes with sheep suet or beeswax to make a salve to help with skin issues such as skin ulcers.

TENNESSEE CHICKWEED (*Stellaria pubera*)

Description: Star shaped white flowers with maroon red stamens. It's five petals appear to be ten petals.

Fun Facts: The Latin name for this flower is *Stellaria*, which comes from the Latin word *stella* meaning "star". The species name, *pubera*, meaning "hairy", comes from the lines of hairs that line the stem. Tennessee Chickweed is also known as Tennessee Starwort and Tennessee Stitchwort. It is a common weed that offers a number of beneficial properties. Many people find that the plant helps reduce inflammation and soothe irritated skin. In addition, animal and test-tube studies suggest that it may have applications in disease treatment and obesity prevention. Chickweed can be applied directly to your skin, made into tea, eaten raw, or infused into an oil for topical use.

DUTCHMAN'S BREECHES (*Dicentra cucullaria*)

Description: Flower is white to pink with a yellow line at the bottom. Resembles pants hanging upside down.

Fun Facts: Dutchman's breeches is one of America's most famous wildflowers, which is understandable due to its unique shape. Its name is derived from the white flowers that look like white breeches. Breeches are knee length trousers, commonly worn by men and boys in the 17th, 18th, and early 19th centuries. This wildflower is famous in the bee world too. Not only is it loved by the bees for both its nectar and pollen but it is actually dependent on bumblebees for survival. In fact, the flower's structure is adapted to be pollinated by bumblebees. Although Native American folklore tells us it was thought to be a Love Charm, this plant is toxic to humans and animals so be very careful around it.

COMMON BLUE VIOLET (*Viola sororia*)

Description: Blue, violet or lilac petals. Two lipped flowers have five petals; the lower petals are a short shoot.

Fun Facts: This ground cover wildflower is as wild as a wildflower can be. Its presence delights us by its beauty, as it spreads rapidly through the forest telling us spring is near. Violets have been used for centuries for its many healing properties. The leaves contain fiber, vitamins A & C, and have antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties. Its vibrant petals offer their own culinary possibilities. They can be used as edible garnish on salads and cakes, turned into candies, jellies, crushed to color sugar, or steeped to make a refreshing purple blue tea.

Cherokee Roots

The Cherokee made a poultice from pounded roots and leaves to treat colds and headaches.

TROUT LILY (*Erythronium umbilicatum*)

Description: Petals bent backwards exposing six brown stamens. Speckled leaves resemble trout markings.

Fun Facts: Although Trout Lilies are not violets, they are also known as the Dogtooth Violet. This refers to the toothlike shape of the white underground bulb. These bulbs are one of chipmunks favorite snacks during the spring. It has also been said that Black Bears will dig up the bulbs and eat them too. Not only do trees hold history in our forest so do Trout Lilies. The huge colonies covering the forest floor can be hundreds of years old.

Cherokee Roots

The Cherokee used the root as fish bait. They would chew the root and spit it in the river to attract fish. They also would crush the leaves and pour the juice over skin sores. In addition, they made tea which was used to break a fever and cold infusion was used to treat fainting.

SQUIRREL CORN (*Dicentra canadensis*)

Description: White-pinkish flowers are dainty broad shaped hearts, sometimes tinted with pale lavender.

Fun Facts: This captivating sweet fragrance wildflower is also known as Bleeding Hearts. This is due to its appearance that is shaped like a heart and pink coloring that appears to be bleeding. However the name Squirrel Corn comes from their yellow tuber that resembles kernels of corn. Be careful around this wildflower as it is similar to Dutchman's Breeches in which it contains alkaloids and is poisonous.

GREAT WHITE TRILLIUM (*Trillium grandiflorum*)

Description: Slightly leaning stalk; three broad petals over-lap at the base; petals are white to pink in color.

Fun Facts: This is the largest and showiest of the trillium. In fact, the flowers become pink-tinted later in the season. Take photos when you see them because White-Tailed Deer find them as a good snack and eat both the foliage and flowers.

Cherokee Roots

The Cherokee warriors often carried the root of the Trillium with them as they went into battle, chewing it to give them added strength and protection. It was also considered to be a treatment for hemorrhaging, asthma, chronic lung disorders, inflammation, skin irritations, tumors, ulcers, and gangrene. Cherokee midwives would wear the trillium to signify their work because it was also used to assist in labor.

FLAME AZALEA (*Rhododendron calendulaceum*)

Description: Yellow to orange to red funnel-shaped trusses. 5-10 flowers per truss protruding showy stamens.

Fun Facts: This bright beauty will give you a sight to see. It's fiery red-orange nectar attracts butterflies, bees, and hummingbirds making the scene even more remarkable. The Flowers usually grow in a large upright branched deciduous Shrub from 6-12 ft. tall and equally as wide. Making it easy to see driving through the Skyway.

Cherokee Roots

The Cherokee would peel and boil the twigs and then apply the residue to areas affected by any inflammation and pain in the joints, muscles, or fibrous tissue, especially rheumatoid arthritis. Sometimes a fungus apple can grow on the Flame Azalea which was eaten to appease thirst. Cherokee would also use the flowers to decorate their homes.

Remember

Leave Not A Trace - LMT

However, we do encourage growth of wildflowers and pollinators. Stop by our local nurseries to get your seeds or starter plants to bring the beauty of spring to your own home.

Visit Our Local Nurseries!

OVERHILL GARDENS

1404 Citico Road, Vonore, TN 37885

Hours: Mon-Sat 8AM-4PM, Mar 15-Dec 15 (open by appointment during the Winter)

TELLICO COMMUNITY FARM MARKET

1472 Fairview Rd, Tellico Plains, TN 37385

Hours: 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM Sunday – CLOSED (Plant Nursery Only Open In The Spring)

GRANNY'S GARDEN GOODS

4117 Hwy 411, Madisonville, TN 37354

Hours: 9:00 AM - 6:00 PM Sunday – CLOSED (Only Open In The Spring)