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**Wildflower Spot – May 2012**  
John Clayton Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

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## WILD STRAWBERRY

*Fragaria virginiana*

By Helen Hamilton, *President of the John Clayton Chapter, VNPS*

Wild Virginia Strawberry has red fruits, similar to the cultivated species, but smaller and much sweeter. The flowers are white, not yellow, and like other members of the Rose family, the centers are filled with a large number of yellow anthers. This plant is instantly recognizable as a strawberry with 3-parted, coarsely toothed

leaves, and a ground-hugging habit. The leaves are carried on six-inch long, hairy stalks, with the flowers no taller, a loose cluster appearing on short, hairy stalks.

Common in patches in fields and dry, open places in sun or shade. Wild Strawberry is found in every county in Virginia, and throughout U.S. and Canada. It will tolerate moderately acid soil. Reproducing by runners, this low plant is a good groundcover over the summer, blooming April-June with spreading green leaves until frost.

Cultivated strawberries are hybrids developed from this native species and a South American one.

The berries attract wildlife, and the plant is a larval host plant for the gray hairstreak butterfly, common in coastal Virginia.

American Indians and early settlers used leaf tea as a nerve tonic and for sore throats, among treatments for other ailments. Recognized for their protective qualities, the berries were eaten for scurvy and gout. An extract of fresh leaves is rich in vitamin C. ❖



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**Photo:** Wild Strawberry (*Fragaria virginiana*) by Helen Hamilton  
For more information about native plants visit [www.vnps.org](http://www.vnps.org).