

## COMMON BLUE VIOLET

*Viola sororia*

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Found in most of the counties in Virginia, and widely distributed across eastern and central U.S., this bright little plant often grows in lawns that are not mowed too high. While Virginia Tech lists this violet as “primarily a weed of turfgrass and landscapes”, their deep purple-blue color is a welcome sign of spring.

The flowers and leaves are on separate stems, all growing no more than 8 inches tall. Blooming early, from March through June, the flowers furnish nectar to the tiny insects that emerge from overwintering in early spring. This is a host plant for fritillary butterflies that lay their eggs on the leaves, which are food for their caterpillars.

Spreading easily by runners and seeds, many gardeners use this common blue violet as groundcover. The plant distributes seeds by mechanical ejection from the three-parted seed capsules, immediately after flowering. Seeds that were ejected in the previous year appear as tiny plants under the clumps that are older.

Common Blue Violet prefers partial sun or light shade and moist to average conditions. The soil should be a rich silty loam or clay loam with above average amounts of organic matter. The flowers and young leaves of violets are edible, and can be added to salads in small amounts. The taste is bland.



Confederate Violet



Common Blue Violet

There are several forms of *Viola sororia* with differently colored flowers; these often grow in close proximity to each other in a given area. A variety with whitish petals and violet markings is known as Confederate Violet. Common Blue Violet is the state flower of New Jersey, Illinois, Rhode Island & Wisconsin. ❖