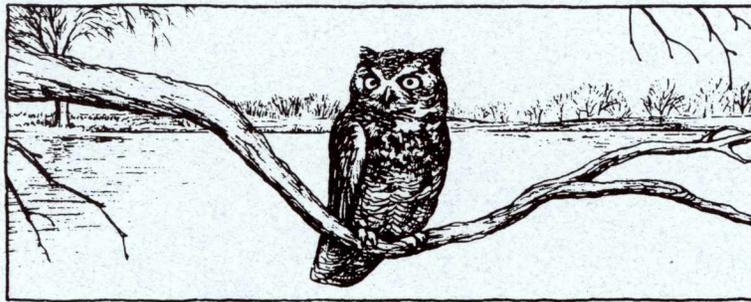


# STILLMAN NEWSLETTER



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## Cereal Hermaphrodites: The Truth Behind Wildflower Names

--Mark Spreyer

The early blooming flowers that decorate the forest floor are some of the most welcome signs of spring. If you visit Stillman in late April and early May, you won't have to walk far from your car to find many of these delicate beauties.

After you learn to identify these plants, you can't help but

wonder how they got names that are often as colorful as their blossoms. With that in mind, let's take a closer look at the names of three woodland wildflowers.

### Virginia Bluebell or Virginia Cowslip (*Mertensia virginica*)

Stillman is probably best known for its spectacular masses of Virginia Bluebells. Once you have seen its blue, bell-shaped flowers, the first name makes sense... but Cowslip? What kind of b---s--- name is that? Actually, that's exactly what it is. Cowslip has its origin in the Anglo-Saxon word *cuslyppe*, *cu* meaning cow and *slyppe* for slop or dung.

Another wildflower, marsh marigold, also has cowslip as an alternate moniker. Marsh marigolds, as the name implies, prefers to grow in wet sites. Similarly, Virginia Cowslip favors moist shaded areas and bottomlands. It is likely that the ground in which these wildflowers grew reminded early European settlers of pastures laden with cow-slop. Or, perhaps,

they were found blossoming in the *cuslyppe*.

Finally, the plant's genus or the first part of its scientific name, *Mertensia*, is for Franz Karl Mertens (1764-1831), a German botanist.

### White or Large-flowered Trillium (*Trillium grandiflorum*)

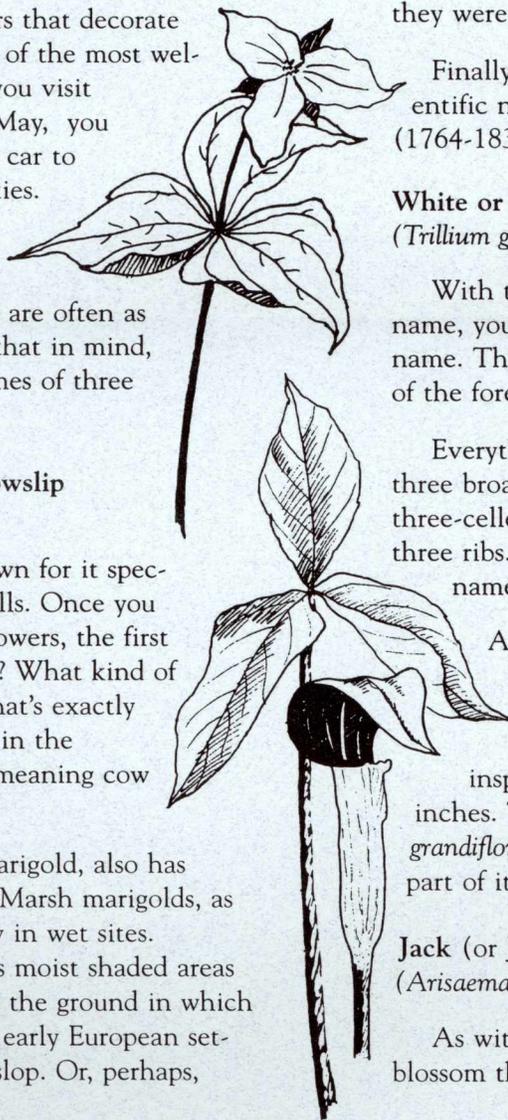
With this trillium, if you know the common name, you are already familiar with the scientific name. This is, arguably, the most appropriately named of the forest wildflowers.

Everything about this plant comes in threes. It has three broad leaves, three white petals, three sepals, three-celled ovaries and its fruit, a red berry, features three ribs. It should come as no surprise that its genus name is derived from *tri*, Latin for three.

Although there are other trilliums that grow in the area, none will be confused with this largest and showiest representative of the clan. Its single white blossom, which inspired both common names, can grow to 4 inches. The Latin translation of large-flowered, *grandiflorum*, is this plant's species and the second part of its scientific name.

### Jack (or Jill) -in-the-pulpit (*Arisaema triphyllum*)

As with the the trillium, it is the appearance of its blossom that has earned this plant its common name.



# STILLMAN NATURE CENTER

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It sports a striped green hood or "pulpit" which curls over "Jack," a club-shaped organ known as a spadix. It is at the base of the *spadix*, where the tiny flowers, either male or female, are to be found. How can you tell a male Jack from a female Jill?

The simple answer is count the leaves. If it only has one three-parted leaf, it's a male. If it has two, it's a female. And yes, to you Latin scholars, the species name, *triphylum*, refers to this wildflower's three-parted leaf.

The fascinating part of this species' natural history is that a particular plant's gender is negotiable. That is to say, one year's Jack may be next year's Jill. If a large female has a few bad years, researchers have found that in the following year it may produce only one leaf and flower as a male. The reverse is also true. Should that scrawny male enjoy good growing conditions, it can regain its status as a large, multi-leaved female.

This sequential hermaphroditism makes me wonder what we should properly call this wildflower. Jack-in-the-Pulpit? Jill-in-the-Pulpit? Wait a second, I've got it. The Cowslip reminds me of Chicago's basketball team, the Bulls. How about Dennis-in-the-pulpit?

## PROGRAMS

### BUILD YOUR OWN BIRD HOUSE

Many birds, including wrens, swallows and bluebirds, like to nest in tree cavities. You can increase the chances of attracting such birds by placing nest boxes in your yard. Join Jim Kaltsas and Roy Schodtler as they help you assemble your own nest box. Feel free to drop in between the times listed and *please bring your own hammer.*



Date: Sunday, March 23  
 Time: 1:00 - 3:30  
 Member's Fee: \$2.00/house kit  
 Non-member's Fee: \$4.00/house kit

### BIRD BANDING RETURNS

Watch Mark Spreyer, a licensed bird bander, measure, weigh and record data about our resident and migratory birds. Birds are not caught in a predictable manner, so come prepared to hike the trails. With luck, you'll see a bird in the hand and two in the bush. If it is raining, the banding open house will be cancelled.



Dates: Sundays, April 6 & May 4  
 Time: 9:00AM to Noon  
 Fee: None

### EARTH DAY BIRD WALK

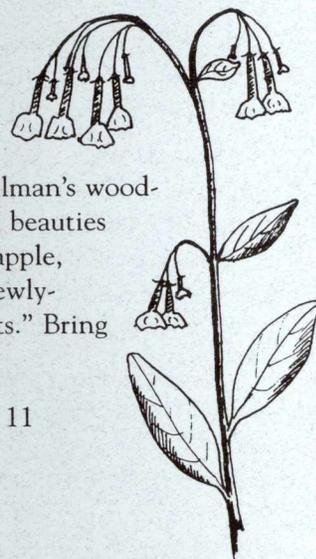
Donald Dann, a trustee with Illinois Nature Conservancy and an active international bird conservationist, will lead an early morning bird walk. Migration will be under way and you never know what we might find. Binoculars and field guides are a must. If you don't have any, don't worry, Stillman does. *Please call 428-OWLS to make reservations.*

Date: Saturday, April 19  
 Time: 7:30AM  
 Fee: None  
 Age: 10 years and up

### WILDFLOWER WALKS

Join us as we explore Stillman's woodlands in search of ephemeral beauties such as white trillium, may-apple, Virginia bluebells and the newly-named "Dennis-in-the-pulpits." Bring your camera!

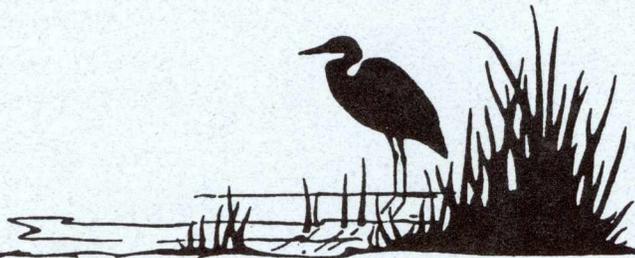
Dates: Sundays, May 4 and 11  
 Time: 2:00PM  
 Age: Ten years and up  
 Fee: None



## Enjoy the Earth for Earth Day!

In honor of Earth Day, we will be open on Saturday, April 19, from 7:30AM to 4:00PM

The Stillman Nature Center is open during the week to school classes, Audubon chapters, garden clubs and other organized groups. Call 428-OWLS to reserve a time for your organization. The small fee charged varies with group size and activity.



### Wonders Of Wetlands

EDUCATORS' WORKSHOP... IT'S BACK.

Last autumn's wetland workshop was so popular, we had to turn folks away. So, we brought it back for spring! This workshop, hosted by the Stillman Nature Center, is aimed at educators who want to learn about wetlands. Those who attend will learn what a wetland is, why they are valuable, and what is being done to conserve Chicagoland's remaining wetlands.

Workshop participants will each receive a copy of *WOW! The Wonders of Wetlands*, a book for educators that describes a variety of activities appropriate for K-12 grade students as well as adult audiences. Other wetland informational materials will also be available.

The instructors will be Cyndi Duda, Environmental Education Specialist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Stillman's Mark Spreyer. The morning's schedule includes getting into, literally, the wetlands. So please bring (or wear) rubber boots or old shoes, and long pants.

Reservations are a must. To sign up, call Mark at (847) 428-OWLS.

Date: Saturday, April 26

Time: 9:00AM to 12:30PM

Fee: \$12.00, payable to Stillman Nature Center.

### SUMMER HOURS BEGIN IN APRIL

In March, Stillman will be open to the public on Sundays from 1 PM to 4 PM. Starting in April, Stillman will be open Sundays from 9AM to 4 PM.

### ACCESSIBILITY TRAIL IS LAUNCHED: Thanks to Wirkus Nurseries and The Garden Club

For nearly a year, landscape architects from Wirkus Nurseries, under the direction John Carlson, have been donating their skills to help design a trail that virtually all visitors, no matter what their abilities, will be able to use. The exciting trail plans were unveiled in February.

As if on cue, The Garden Club of Barrington earmarked a donation of \$7,000 to build the first leg of this trail. Our accessibility project has already benefited from The Garden Club's previous contribution. Thanks to their help we restored the arbor and planted woodland wildflowers that will be visible from portions of the trail.

The Stillman Nature Center is grateful to ALL of our donors and friends. Our nature center prospers because all of you, both individuals and organizations, have chosen to support us. Finally, special thanks to Helen Withrow who does a wonderful job of organizing our annual membership drive.

### CALLING VOLUNTEERS

Daria Sapp and her indefatigable landscape volunteers need help. Duties include buckthorn clearing, prairie burning and wildflower planting.

Stillman has the tools. We need healthy, outdoor-loving bodies to wield them. If you can help, stop by Stillman on any Thursday morning at 9:00AM. Work usually wraps up around noon. Questions? Call Daria at 381-5358.

*...the care of the earth is our most ancient and most worthy and, after all, our most pleasing responsibility. To cherish what remains of it, and to foster its renewal, is our only legitimate hope.*

--Wendell Berry



Email: stillmc@flash.net  
 (847) 428-OWLS  
 South Barrington, IL 60010  
 33 West Penny Road

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 nature center



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*If you aren't already a Friend, please consider joining us.*

- Yes, I'd like to become a Friend of the Stillman Nature Center. I enclose my tax deductible contribution of \$\_\_\_\_\_.
- I'd like to help as a volunteer with programs or land management at the Stillman Nature Center, please call me.
- Please send a gift membership from \_\_\_\_\_ to the name and address listed below.

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