Native Plant of the Month

Bleeding Heart
*Dicentra formosa*

- The heart shape of the flowers gives rise to the common name. "Formosa" means “beautiful, handsome, well-formed” which is a good description of this pleasing woodland plant.
- Flowers are pollinated by our native bumblebee and visited by hummingbirds.
- Seeds are attractive to ants which help to disperse the seed in the forest duff.
- The rhizome was used by native people to help ease the pain of a toothache, and also as a hair rinse.

Landscape Value

Bleeding heart is highly adaptable and tough, with lacy foliage and unique, dainty flowers. Spreading by underground rhizomes, it quickly forms masses that offer early spring bloom and often blooms again in early fall. Bleeding heart will take sun or shade, preferring the light shade of woodland borders and perennial beds. A similar species, *D. spectabilis*, is an import from Asia with taller erect growth. Mix with other woodland groundcovers such as Siberian miner’s-lettuce, false lily of the valley, star-flowered false Solomon’s seal, and *Corydalis* for a charming fairyland groundcover.

Text by Heidi Bohan
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