Native Plant of the Month

Swamp Lantern or Skunk Cabbage

*Lysichiton americanus*

- This plant emits a chemical which heats the soil, allowing it to emerge in early spring. This, along with the shape of its bright yellow flower stalk, leads to its common name, swamp lantern.
- The flower arrives before bees and butterflies, so it emits a strong odor that attracts carrion beetles and blowflies as pollinators, hence its other common name.
- The large waxy leaves were used by native people for gathering, preparing, and storing food, much like we use wax paper today.

**Landscape Value**

Swamp lantern is an “obligate” wetland plant which indicates the presence of wetlands with associated hydrology and soils.

This is an attractive and exotic plant to include in the wetland landscape. It thrives in wetland forest and bog plantings, and is especially attractive along pond edges and in forest glens.

They can be planted *en masse* or as individuals with lady fern, slough sedge, Pacific water parsley, and moss-covered nurse logs, and an over-story of Indian plum, salmonberry, red alder, red cedar, Sitka spruce, and other wetland plants.

Text by Heidi Bohan

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