Native Plant of the Month

Western Trillium
Also Western Wake-Robin
*Trillium ovatum*

- The three petals, sepals, leaves and seedpod shape are reflected in the name “trillium” which means “in threes” in Latin.
- The flowers bloom at the time robins seem to ‘wake up’ in spring.
- Native children were cautioned not to pick the flower since it might bring rain, and current folklore suggests that the flower won’t return for seven years if picked.
- The seed is attractive to ants who carry it back to their nests, helping to disperse the seed throughout the forest.

Text by Heidi Bohan
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Trillium flowers change from white to purple as they age.

Landscape Value

Trillium often grows in masses in the deep forest, where the flat spread of leaves makes maximum use of available sunlight. This makes it ideal for shady garden corners, and under the canopy of trees such as vine maple and cedar.

Trillium has become scarce in public areas because its early single bloom and small size makes this especially tempting to pick or transplant.

Plants can be purchased at native plant sales and nurseries. Mix with nurse logs and moss, and other delicate forest ground-covers such as inside-out flower, bleeding heart, corydalis, and wood sorrel.