Grass-of-Parnassus

Parnassia glauca


Where can you find this plant?

Plant type: Flowering perennial.

Bloom period: August – September.

Distinguishing characteristics: Leaves grow in a rosette and are broad, leathery, and long-stemmed. Leaves are rounded or heart-shaped at the base, with rounded tips. Showy, white, five-petaled ¾ to 1½ inch wide are veined with green and are found on long stalks, with one small, stalkless leaf often clasping it. Plants grow 6-18 inches tall.

Habitat quality: This species does not tolerate dense shade or disturbance. It is found in intact, high-quality prairie fen systems.
Where can you find this plant?

Indiana

New York

Ohio

Wisconsin

For more information on native plants and prairie fens, go to www.nativeplants.msu.edu
Key description

C =
Coefficient of conservatism. This is a value that ranges from 0 for non-native invasives to 10 for plants that would only be expected to be found in undisturbed, high quality plant communities. It is a general guideline for whether the plant would be likely to be found in an intact prairie fen (not filled in with shrubs and without invasive species). However, C values may be high for some species that are not found in prairie fen but would be part of another wetland such as a marsh. They are included here because they are a widely accepted measure of habitat quality in the Midwest (http://1.usa.gov/FQAMethod).

Flower type
Classifications here follow those of Newcomb’s wildflower guide (http://amzn.com/0316604429).

Number of regular parts
The flower has this number of petals or petal-like parts that are symmetrical from the flower center (radial), with each similar to the other in shape, size, and color. There may be 3 to 7 regular parts. See image at right.

Aster
These flowers have regular parts and are symmetrical from the center, but there are more than 7. Asters have a set of disc flowers in the center of the flower and a set of ray flowers outside of the disc flowers, often called petals. They are one group (genus) within the family Asteraceae, and there are many species in this genus.

Flowers not readily obvious
The flowers of plants such as grasses, sedges, and cattail are not obvious and are often confused with the fruits (seeds) of these species. While this website does not include flower descriptions for these species, they do flower.

Irregular
The flower is not symmetrical from the center but is symmetrical down a line (bilateral). See image at right.

No flowers
A number of primitive plants, including ferns, do not flower but make spores in order to reproduce.

Parts indistinguishable
These species either have parts so small their number is difficult to determine or have no petal-like parts. This group includes goldenrods, other species with small individual flowers, and plants in the family Asteraceae that have more than 7 parts, but the parts do not form distinguishable, symmetrical ray flowers (which are often called petals).