

Wild strawberry

Fragaria virginiana

Family: *Rosaceae* **Genus:** *Fragaria* **Species:** *virginiana* **Average Height:** 4"
Bloom Time: April-May (fruit ripens late May-early June) **Elevation Range:** Common at all elevations in Virginia **Geologic/Soil Associations:** occurs across full spectrum of geologies
Soil Drainage Class and Moisture Regime: Well-drained. Somewhat xeric to mesic
Light and Aspect: Part shade to full sun. Flat terrain, southeast, southwest, south, and west

Habitat Associations: Remnant Piedmont savannas, woodland openings and edges, recently cleared areas, including roadcuts, fire-managed grasslands.

Flora Associations: Imagine wild strawberries growing across the land in such abundance that there would be no need to put them in a garden bed. When Europeans first encountered this delectable juicy red berry it was that prolific! It's no wonder that *Fragaria virginiana* is featured in native mythology (notably in the Cherokee relationship saga "The Origin of Strawberries"), and is given the sweetly fitting name "heartberry" by the Lenape. *F. virginiana* sends its runners away from shaded areas into sunny grasslands where it grows with hundreds of other species including *Lespedeza repens* (creeping lespedeza), *Antennaria parlinii* (Parlin's pussytoes), *Sisyrinchium angustifolium* (narrow-leaved blue-eyed grass), *Potentilla canadensis* (common cinquefoil), and *Carex tonsa* (shaved sedge).

Fauna Associations: *Fragaria virginiana* pollen supports many bees including bumblebees, cuckoo bees, and mason bees, but it is vital for the little *Andrena melanochroa* (rose miner bee) who will only forage from this and a few other plants in the *Rosaceae* family. Flies that love strawberry nectar include syrphid

flies, tachinid flies, and bottle flies. Caterpillars of the rare and imperiled butterfly, the Appalachian grizzled skipper (*Pyrgus centaureae wyandot*), feed exclusively on this plant or closely related common cinquefoil (*Potentilla canadensis*). Other insect feeders include the strawberry flea beetle (*Altica ignita*), the strawberry sap beetle (*Stelidota geminata*), and the strawberry aphid (*Chaetosiphon fragaefolii*). Several birds enjoy the fruits, including the brown thrasher (*Toxostoma rufum*), eastern towhee (*Pipilo erythrophthalmus*), and veery (*Catharus fuscescens*). Eastern box turtles (*Terrapene carolina carolina*) are glad for the treat if they manage to beat the birds! Eastern cottontails (*Sylvilagus floridanus*) are very fond of the foliage.

Notes: *Fragaria*, from the Latin *fraga*, "strawberry," which derives from *fragum*, "fragrant". Berries are usually eaten raw, but they can also be dried or made into jam.

Both leaves and fruits are high in vitamin C. The cultivated strawberry (*F. ananassa*) is a hybrid between *F. virginiana* and *F. chiloensis*.

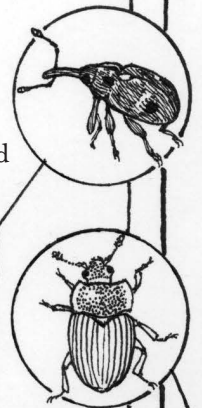
Spring azure
(Celastrina ladon) x 1

Leaves basal, 3-parted, toothed; end tooth usually half as wide and shorter than the side teeth; leaflets stalked.

Rose miner bee
(Andrena melanochroa) x 2

Juvenile Eastern cottontail
(Sylvilagus floridanus) x 1/2

Flowers white, 5-parted, 1/2"-3/4" wide; inflorescence of up to 12 flowers on stalks usually shorter than the leaves.



Strawberry budweevil
(Anthrenus signatus) x 6

Strawberry sap beetle
(Stelidota geminata) x 6



Eastern towhee
(Pipilo erythrophthalmus) x 1/2

Indian strawberry (*Duchesnea indica*) is an invasive impostor with yellow flowers and tasteless fruit.