

The Best Places to Find Native Plants in Indiana

A seasonal guide to botanizing the
Hoosier state



Indiana Native
Plant Society

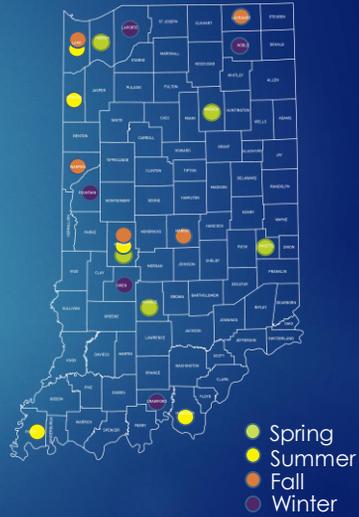


So many natural areas to visit!

This brisk hike through 20 of Indiana's beautiful natural areas will cover a mix of geography, plant communities, terrain, and seasons.

All of these sites are open to the public and have trails (except one). To find more information on each of these sites, just click the URL on each slide.

Ready to start hiking?



Spring

County	Site	Land Manager
Fayette	Shrader-Weaver Nature Preserve	DNR – Div. of Nature Preserves
Monroe	Hayes Trail in the Deam Wilderness	Hoosier National Forest
Porter	Indiana Dunes State Park and Dunes Nature Preserve	DNR – State Parks and Reservoirs, DNR – Div. of Nature Preserves
Putnam	Tall Timbers Trail in Big Walnut Natural Area	The Nature Conservancy, DNR- Div. of Nature Preserves
Wabash	Kokiwanee Nature Preserve	ACRES Land Trust

For each season, there'll be a table with the five sites featured for the season, including the county, the site name, and the land manager.



On each slide you'll see the URL to click near the bottom and the logo of the land management agency.

Shrader-Weaver, a National Natural Landmark, contains a pioneer homestead, open fields, and woods. A 28-acre old-growth upland forest is beech-maple dominated with large specimens of tulip, black cherry, black walnut, red elm, and bur oak. There is also a rich variety of spring wildflowers like blue-eyed Mary, prairie trillium, and false rue anemone. The lowland woods have been cut and grazed, but still contain some of the larger trees, including bur oak, red oak, green ash, and sycamore. And on the floor of the lowland woods can be found skunk cabbage, golden ragwort, and marsh marigold.



This area of the Deam Wilderness has tremendous diversity of plant species and is one of the Hoosier National Forest's hikes for the Annual Wildflower Foray held the last Saturday in April every year in Brown and Monroe County. Spring wildflowers abound, and the mesic areas along the creek have an incredible early bloom, showcasing blue-eyed Mary, fire pink, miterwort, and celandine poppy, along with lots of Virginia bluebells. As spring progresses American gromwell, false hellebore, and large whorled pogonia can be seen blooming along the upland trail.



The Indiana dunes are worth visiting any time of year for the incredible scenery of dunes along Lake Michigan. You'll see plant species here you won't see anywhere else in the state, including marram grass along the shoreline, the evergreen bearberry and prostrate juniper. White and jack pine both occur naturally in pockets. In dry areas blueberry and bracken fern are found, and in swampy areas cinnamon fern stands tall. In spring the wildflowers take center stage including the dramatic marsh marigold, the tiny and delicate dwarf ginseng, and a profusion of wild lupine.

Note there are two land manager logos here. That's because while this site is a state park, within it there is a state dedicated nature preserve. This is an extra designation given to the absolute best pieces of natural Indiana left, and dedicating it as a state nature preserve gives Division of Nature Preserves the ability to protect the site.



Big Walnut Natural Area is less than an hour from Indianapolis but a visit brings you to an oasis of hundreds of acres of beautiful hardwood forest. Steep ravines and rich mesic slopes support a good diversity of spring wildflowers that can be seen along the two-mile Tall Timbers trail. Hikers in spring will see acres and acres of Virginia bluebells blooming along the creek with redbud shrubs in flower above them. There's plenty of common spring ephemerals like bloodroot, but the lucky observer may find Guyandotte beauty (*Synandra hispidula*), an uncommon plant of rich, moist soils. Also, keep an eye out for showy orchis, blue cohosh and other spring plants.



Kokiwanee Nature Preserve is one of the most diverse nature preserves in northern Indiana. It features many different habitats, including bluffs along the Salamonie River, hillside seeps, a hanging fen, as well as beautiful upland forests with creeks featuring waterfalls. Those many habitats result in high plant diversity, including five different species of trillium and eight species of orchid found here. The spring wildflower display plays out over months, starting with hepatica in early spring, then Virginia bluebells in midspring, and wild hyacinth in late spring. A 4.6 mile trail takes the visitor around the property to see the many special features of this preserve.

Summer

County	Site	Land Manager
Harrison	Teepie Glade Nature Preserve	The Nature Conservancy
Lake	Cressmore Prairie Nature Preserve	Shirley Heinz Land Trust
Monroe	Bean Blossom Bottoms Nature Preserve	Sycamore Land Trust
Newton	Efroymsen Restoration at Kankakee Sands	The Nature Conservancy
Posey	Twin Swamps Nature Preserve	DNR – Division of Nature Preserves

Summer

Teeple Glade Nature Preserve, Harrison County



Teeple Glade Nature Preserve is part of the 1,100-acre Harrison County Glades complex managed by The Nature Conservancy. It's a classic limestone glade, meaning that limestone bedrock is so close to the surface that tree growth is limited, leaving the area open to sunlight and resulting in a profusion of flowering plants, including several rare ones. Teeple Glade was an early acquisition by The Nature Conservancy dedicated as a state nature preserve in 1988. Some of the unusual plants you may see in bloom in early summer include straggling St. John's wort and anglepod, but the real star of the show in early June is pale purple coneflower, which dominates throughout most of the glade. Other plants you may come across include black-stem spleenwort, crownbeard, false aloe and glade heliotrope, among others.



One of the rarest ecosystems in the state, the black-soil prairie at Cressmoor Prairie, a dedicated Indiana state nature preserve, is an extremely high-quality landscape. Walk the trail in late summer and you'll know the wonder that early settlers felt when they emerged from the great eastern forest to discover the sea of grassland that stretched from here to the foothills of the Rockies.

Grasses reach eight feet skyward, sunflowers even higher. Spikes of colorful wildflowers flourish in abundance, including Sullivant's milkweed and obedient plant. The trail at Cressmoor Prairie has been dedicated in honor of the late Keith Board, long time INPS member whose legendary "botanizing" explorations resulted in the discovery and ultimately the protection of the preserve. The photo of Sullivant's milkweed is one of Keith's many stunning plant photos. [Download a copy of his moving 1996 dedication speech [here](#).]

Summer

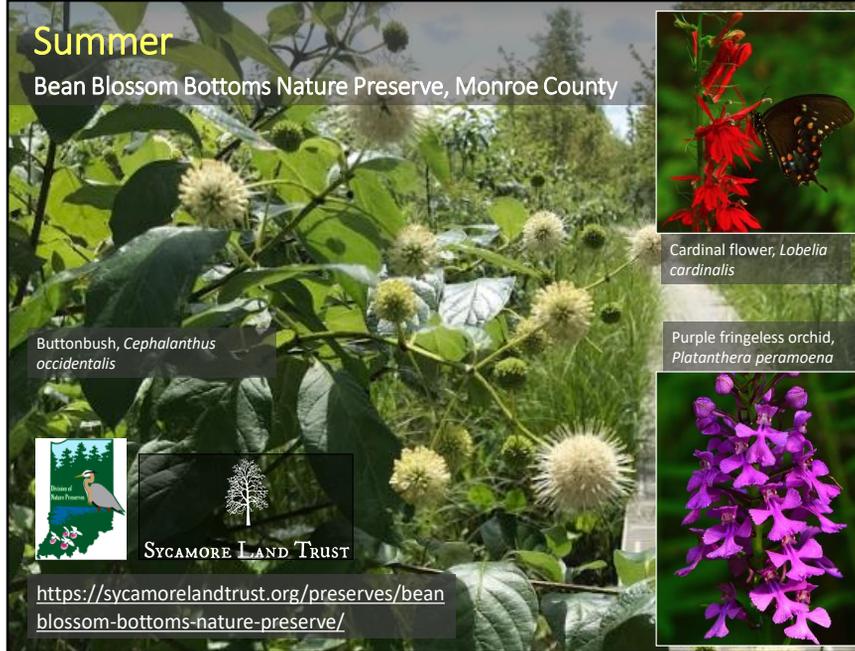
Twin Swamps Nature Preserve, Posey County



Spider lily, *Hymenocallis occidentalis*

https://www.in.gov/dnr/naturepreserve/files/np-TwinSwamps_Directory_Page.pdf

Twin Swamps NP is only a half an hour from Evansville, although you feel like you may have reached the end of the world here! And you have, at least for Indiana. This is a must-see site near the confluence of the Wabash and Ohio Rivers. Twin Swamps is so named as there are two parallel swamps at this site: Overcup oak swamp and cypress swamp, with flatwoods in between the swamps. A trail takes you past both of these. It's easy walking, but there's lots of poison ivy (stay on trail!). Later in summer (August), the tropical looking spiderlily's (*Hymenocallis occidentalis*) showy white blooms may be seen in low areas in the flatwoods. Spring is another good time to visit, as the summer's heat in far southwestern Indiana can be challenging. *Boardwalk is currently closed as it will be replaced, but still worth the visit.



Bean Blossom Bottoms has a 1.6-mile boardwalk trail and four observation decks providing exceptional access to diverse wetlands. The majority of the property has been dedicated by the state as an Indiana Nature Preserve, and it has also been recognized as a state Important Bird Area by the National Audubon Society and a Wetland of Distinction by the Society of Wetland Scientists. In summer you'll see plenty in bloom, including blue flag iris, lizard's tail, buttonbush, cardinal flower, and even purple fringeless orchid.



The Efroymsen Restoration at Kankakee Sands is 8,400 acres of prairies and wetlands, owned and managed by the Indiana chapter of The Nature Conservancy. More than 600 species of native plants have been used to plant the prairies of Kankakee Sands and as a result, the land is teeming with native wildlife. Kankakee Sands provides habitat for more than 240 bird species, including such rare species as the Henslow's sparrow, northern harrier and least bittern. A 1,000-acre pasture has a herd of approx. 80 bison, which help to maintain the diversity of the prairie. Kankakee Sands is also home to 70 species of butterflies, including the state-endangered regal fritillary butterfly shown on this wild bergamot flower.

There are several trails to explore on the property. The one pictured here is the Grace Teninga Discovery trail, which features plant species from prickly pear on the dry dunes to cardinal flower in the wetlands but information on other trails can be found on-line, including a monarch and milkweed trail.

Fall

County	Site	Land Manager
LaGrange	Mongoquinong Nature Preserve	DNR – Division of Fish and Wildlife
Lake	Hoosier Prairie Nature Preserve	DNR – Division of Nature Preserves
Marion	Eagle’s Crest Nature Preserve, Eagle Creek Park	Indy Parks and Recreation
Monroe	Porter West Preserve	Sycamore Land Trust
Warren	Gladys and Al Wright Rock Creek Nature Reserve	NICHES Land Trust

Fall

Mongoquinong Nature Preserve, LaGrange County



Fringed gentian,
Gentianopsis crinita



Prairie dock, *Silphium
terrebinthaceum*



Grass of parnassus,
Parnassia glauca



<https://www.in.gov/dnr/naturepreserve/files/np-Mongoquinong.pdf>

Fens are a rare and sensitive wetland community fed by groundwater known for incredibly diverse flora. Because they are usually quite small and sensitive, very few are open to the public. This preserve is an exception. While there are no trails, the terrain is largely flat, though wet, so rubber boots are suggested. This dedicated nature preserve in the Pigeon River Fish and Wildlife Area protects an alkaline fen community that is dominated by graminoids, *Carex stricta* (tussock sedge) for example. In fall visitors can see fringed gentians and grass of parnassus in flower, with scattered prairie docks.

*Be aware of hunting seasons as this is a state fish and wildlife area.

Fall

Hoosier Prairie Nature Preserve, Lake County



Hoosier Prairie Nature Preserve is a must see in late summer and fall when the prairie and savanna are in full force! This 1,500-acre nature preserve is in an otherwise urban setting (near Griffith) and has a spectacular array of plant communities, including prairie, oak savanna, marshes, and sedge meadows. Asters like the flat-topped and azure aster abound, and the summer-blooming species like false wild indigo can be seen in fruit. Two trails take visitors through the highlights of this preserve.



Eagle's Crest Nature Preserve provides natural solitude in Indianapolis. Located on the west side of Eagle Creek Park, which is managed by Indianapolis Parks and Recreation, it's an oasis of mature hardwood forest that features dramatic overlooks of Eagle Creek Reservoir and some very large trees. In October those trees provide a colorful curtain along the lake. It has a very diverse understory, with species like blue-stemmed goldenrod blooming in the late summer and fall. A 1.25 mile loop trail passes through many of the preserve's highlights to let visitors see all the botanical treasures.



Porter West Preserve in Monroe County is a beautiful mature upland forest dotted with sinkholes and a karst spring. While it has a wonderful show of spring ephemerals the fall colors of species like red maple are also stunning, and the late summer and fall asters like Short's aster put on a lovely display. There is also a small historic cemetery from the early 19th century.

Fall

Gladys & Al Wright Rock Creek Nature Reserve, Warren County



The Gladys and Al Wright Rock Creek Nature Reserve is 80-acres situated a mile southeast of West Lebanon in Warren County. Rock Creek bisects the mostly wooded acreage. The creek runs over bedrock and forms tiny waterfalls in some places; while in others it has cut through sandstone leaving small sculpted cliffs. Eventually, the creek makes its way into the Wabash River.

Native woodland wildflowers are abundant and varied here. Evidence of the rich flora biodiversity, more than 100 different species of plants were noted on a visit to this property in April 2001. In fall, the trees aren't the only colorful plants to look at. Shrubs like maple-leaved viburnum light up the understory with their red leaves while bulblet ferns turn yellow.

Winter

County	Site	Land Manager
Crawford	Hemlock Cliffs Special Area	Hoosier National Forest
Fountain	Portland Arch Nature Preserve	DNR – Division of Nature Preserves
LaPorte	Ambler Flatwoods Nature Preserve	Shirley Heinze Land Trust
Noble	Edna W. Spurgeon Woodland Reserve	ACRES Land Trust
Owen	Green's Bluff Nature Preserve	The Nature Conservancy



Winter is a great time to visit Hemlock Cliffs Special Area in Crawford County when waterfalls can freeze into picturesque ice pinnacles. Lots of evergreen plants can be found here, including eastern hemlock trees, which are relatively uncommon in Indiana with only a few large stands in the state. This site is a deep box canyon of dramatic sandstone rock formations and seasonal waterfalls. Spring is another great time to visit, as wildflowers line the creek below the rock formations.

Winter

Portland Arch Nature Preserve, Fountain County



Snow trillium, *Trillium nivale*



White pine, *Pinus strobus*



https://www.in.gov/dnr/naturepreserve/files/Portland_Arch.pdf

Portland Arch Nature Preserve is a National Natural Landmark well worth visiting in both spring and winter. Portland Arch's namesake comes from the natural sandstone arch that the trail passes under. The site has native white pine, an uncommon species in Indiana, high up above the cliffs, which make it particularly scenic in winter. And if you don't think we have flowers in winter, think again! One of our first flowers of the year, snow trillium, can be found here blooming in February, long before the spring wildflowers come out.



Ambler Flatwoods is a boreal flatwoods community found nowhere else in Indiana and is a haven for plants typically found much farther north. At least 39 state-listed plant species and many others considered rare in the Chicago region are found here. It's uniqueness has been recognized through dedication as a state nature preserve.

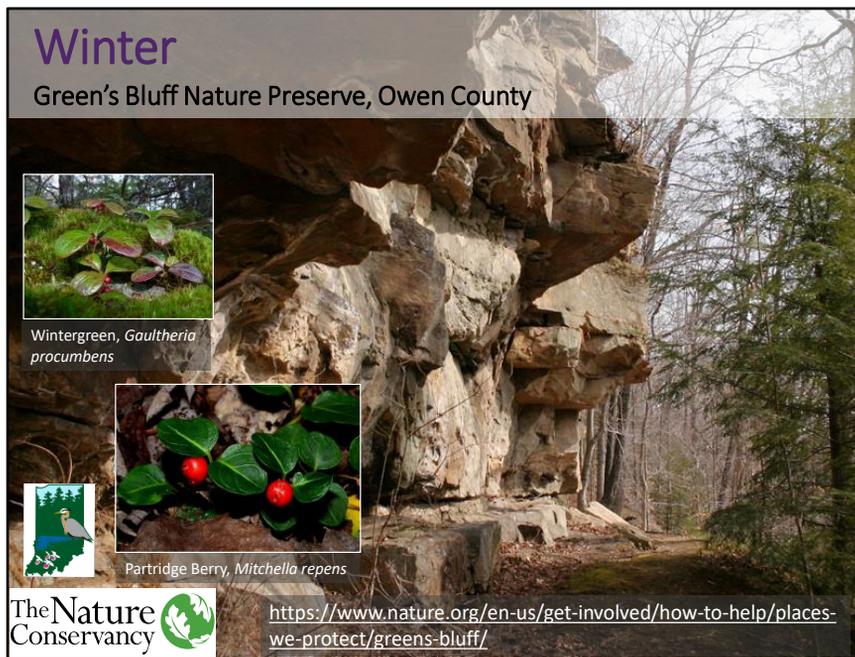
Winter is a great time to visit to see the evergreen tiny forests of rare club mosses like princess pine. True mosses are also evergreen and show up well in the winter, like this hairy cap moss. Vernal pools cover a great portion of the property in winter and spring, and twenty species of reptiles and amphibians have been identified here.

Winter

Edna W. Spurgeon Woodland Reserve, Noble County



The first land trust in Indiana was ACREs Land Trust covering northeast Indiana, and the Edna W. Spurgeon Woodland Reserve was the first ACREs property and is now a dedicated state preserve. It's an area of low ridges, or kames, left by glaciers and cut by glacial meltwater. A climax forest of beech, sugar maple and tulip trees that are among the largest in the state covers the area. While it's known for its abundant wildflowers in the spring, it should not be missed in winter. You'll see vernal ponds like this one frozen over, just waiting for the first spring thaw to explode with the calls of spring peepers. You'll also see the winter leaves of putty root orchid and sharp-lobed hepatica.



Owned and managed by The Nature Conservancy, Green's Bluff was dedicated as a State Nature Preserve in 1986. Green's Bluff in Owen County is over 500 acres of wooded riparian habitat with uplands, ravines, tributary valleys, steep cliffs, karst features, hemlock forest, and floodplain forest. The preserve also features a great blue heron rookery as well as an old grist mill whose remnants can be found in a bend of Raccoon Creek. In winter the hemlocks along the bluff stand out clearly. Two other evergreen plants that can be seen near the bluffs are wintergreen and partridge berry.

Thank you to all the Land Trusts and Land Management Agencies for protecting and managing these sites for native plants in Indiana.

HOOSIER National Forest





Thank you to all the photographers!

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