



Flowers in Our Lawns

Before you mow your lawn this spring take your children out for a flower search. Scattered in among the grass maybe tiny little flowers. Some lawns may not have any of these mini plants others will have them in abundance. Colors range from purples and hot pinks to soft blues, white and yellow. The shapes of the flowers and leaves are equally varied. To take a good look at these flowers many call weeds, grab a small hand lens and head outside.

Older children can conduct inventories and surveys of the various types of plants. Where in the yard do most of the plants occur? Do you find them in shady areas or in the sunnier locations of the yard. You can collect some of the plants and press them in a book or make a plant press, directions below.

Here are descriptions of some of the more common lawn flowers. You can find pictures of each on line by searching by the plant name. Some have interesting histories that are also available on-line.

- ☼ Henbit is one of the more common weeds, growing in even the poorest soil. There are several species of this plant, each slightly different. Some think the erect purple flowers resemble rabbits, what do you think? The opposite leaves encircle the stem with bright purple flower buds nested in the top leaves like little Easter eggs. The stem is actually square, a characteristic of the mint family.
- ☼ Field Pansy is no larger than a thumbnail. The field pansy resemble the larger garden variety but are nestled down in our yards and often over looked. The small white flower has a yellow center that marks the center for any small native bees who are looking for nectar and can pollinate the flowers.
- ☼ Speedwell is a small light blue flower with four petals forming a small tube. History tells us that this plant was made into a spring tonic to cure small illnesses.
- ☼ Dandelion doesn't need much of an introduction and is the larger of our lawn flowers. The yellow flower head is actually made up of many small flowers. Each one of these small flowers produces a seed that make up the seed ball that are often blown by children making a wish as they scatter the seeds. There are a lot of "uses" for the dandelion and in some cultures they are eaten. The leaves are deeply serrated resemble the teeth of the lion, the French description of the leaf is "dente de lion" or teeth of the lion. The leaves can be used in a salad either raw or cooked. The flowers have been made into wine and the milky sap allegedly cures warts.
- ☼ Buttercup this shiny yellow flower is often held under the chin to see if you like butter! The sap of the buttercup has been known to cause skin irritating and can make you sick if eaten. Just picking the flowers shouldn't be a problem if hands are washed afterward.
- ☼ Wood violet this common lawn plant likes moist shady areas. The heart shaped leaves are easily recognized as are the deep purple flower. If you can find the seed pods after the flowers have bloomed, touch them lightly with a toothpick size stick and they will explode shooting tiny seeds everywhere. The flowers are high in vitamin C and were eaten during colonial times in salads or sugared.

Plant Press Instructions

A plant press will help you save the flowers and leaves of plants and use them in crafts. You will need two pieces of heavy cardboard about three inches square for lawn flowers. In addition, you will need rubber bands and newspaper and a few sheets of white tissue paper cut to the same size as the cardboard. Sandwich the paper between the cardboard to make your press.

To use place your flower between the sheets of tissue paper and then layer a few pieces of newspaper, more tissue paper with a flower, several sheets of newspaper, repeat. With the cardboard on the outside rubber band it together. The tissue and newspaper will absorb the moisture in the plants as they are pressed flat.

Allow a month before you open the press and check the plants. When dry, you can place them in a small frame, laminate them into a bookmark.

