

MACALESTER COLLEGE

SAINT PAUL, MINNESOTA 55105

■ DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGY

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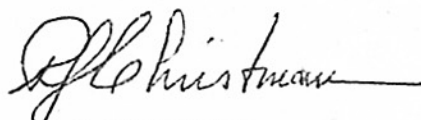
Subject: A SPRING FLOWER at ORDWAY.

Springtime in Minnesota is apt to display a capricious nature, varying considerably year-by-year and having all sorts of weather surprises. (Even as I write these lines a sudden snow-shower whipped by a northwest wind adds an incongruous note to the cheery attempts of the Field Sparrow to announce spring with his sweet song.) The effect of this perennial unpredictability is to heighten one's interest in and excitement at the early signs of spring's return. One of the most joyful signs is the emergence of the flowering plants in the woods and fields. Somehow their appearance is a heartening sign to us that conditions have indeed advanced into the spring season.

The most spectacular of such events at Ordway is the flowering of the Rue Anemone (Anemonella thalictroides), an almost-dainty plant which pushes its delicate simple white-to-pink blossoms up through the litter of oak-leaves and covers the forest floor with its delicate flowers which rise on single stalks above a whorl of small three-lobed leaves that are quite as dainty as the flower itself. It will achieve a height of 10-15 centimeters and its flowers usually have six petals although sometimes as many as nine or ten. The "petals" are actually sepals but that is of interest to botanists and would seem to complicate the enjoyment of this delightfully simple thing of beauty which carpets our woods early in spring each year. The color variations are interesting, ranging from pure white through various pinks to a light purple. The flower is also one of the longer-lasting ones and we can depend upon its cheery presence in the sunlighted areas of the oak forests for three weeks or so.

For the bulk of the year the Rue Anemone disappears from our sight and consciousness, returning its seed to the bosom of the woods and fading from the busy summertime scene. However, it survives to emerge early each year, pushing the leafy overburden aside with its smooth, delicate stems and bursting forth from the detritus to remind us again of the advancing season.

It would be very hard to say that it is not my favorite wild flower.....



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