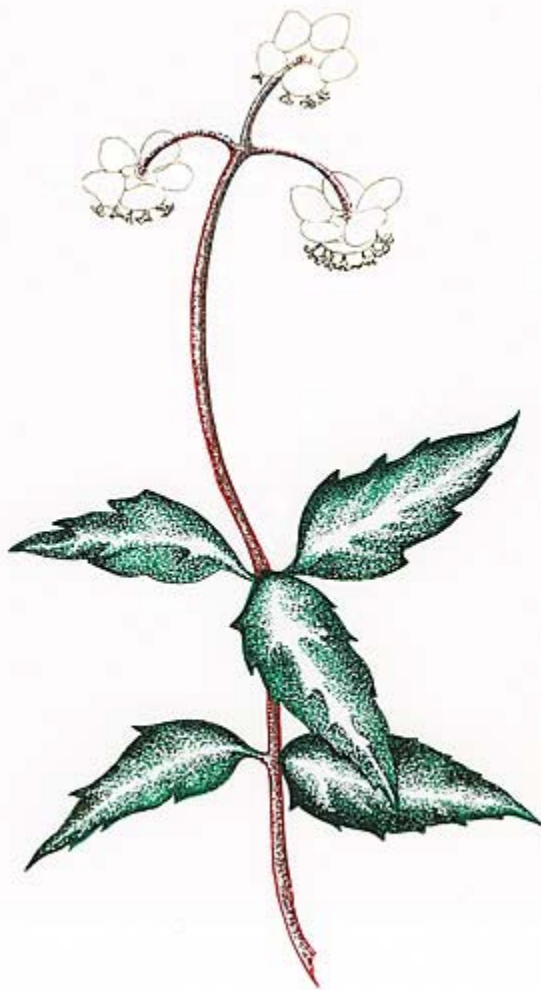


Wildflower in Focus

Text by Melanie Choukas-Bradley
Artwork by Tina Thieme Brown

Striped Wintergreen (Spotted Wintergreen)

Chimaphila maculata (L.) Pursh
Pyrola, Wintergreen or Shinleaf Family
(*Pyrolaceae*)



Chimaphila maculata • Striped Wintergreen
Tina Thieme Brown ©2007

As the blooming season winds down and autumn leaves fall from the deciduous trees, interest turns to evergreen plants, including the few evergreen wildflowers in our native flora. One of the most

charming among them often goes by the misleading common name "spotted wintergreen" but I prefer to call it by the more aptly descriptive name "striped wintergreen." Striped wintergreen is a low-growing herbaceous plant with creamy-veined (or "striped") forest-green leaves. Finding a small colony of striped wintergreen plants during a winter woodland walk is always an uplifting experience. The woody fruit capsules remain on the plant through the winter. The nodding flowers appear in early summer, often in pairs. Peter Mazzeo, who was a botanist with the National Arboretum for many years and a popular teacher with the USDA Graduate School Field Studies Program, often said the flowers reminded him of old-fashioned street lamps.

Flowers: Frequently in pairs but may grow singly or several per stalk. Five waxy white or pale pink petals are rounded at the tips. Pistil is showy, short, wide and usually green. Flowers 1/2-1" across.

Fruit: Small, round, woody capsules persist on the plant through winter. My daughter called them "little pumpkins" when she was a child. (This plant obviously inspires the imagination.)

Leaves: Opposite or (more often) whorled, simple, lanceolate, dark green or blue-green with white stripes along the veins. Thick, leathery, evergreen, 3/4-3" long, with sparse, sharp, shallow teeth.

Height: 2-10".

Habitat and Range: Dry, acidic woods; New England to Michigan, south to Georgia and Alabama. Grows throughout Maryland.

Blooming Time: June-August.

Similar Species: Pipsissewa or prince's-pine (*C. umbellata*), a widely distributed North American/Eurasian plant, grows in the mid-Atlantic region, including Maryland. Its leaves lack white stripes.

Wildflower in Focus text adapted from **An Illustrated Guide to Eastern Woodland Wildflowers and Trees: 350 Plants Observed at Sugarloaf Mountain, Maryland** (Choukas-Bradley and Brown, University of Virginia Press).