Plants: Podophyllum peltatum L.
Mayapple, Indian apple, Wild mandrake, Pomme de mai, Podophylle pelt
Berberidaceae (Barberry Family)
USDA Symbol: POPE
USDA Native Status: Native to U.S.

Mayapple is unique in that it has only 2 leaves and 1 flower, which grows in the axil of the leaves. The large, twin, umbrella-like leaves of mayapple are showy and conspicuous. They remain closed as the stem lengthens, unfolding 6-8 inches across when the plant has reached its 1-1 1/2 ft. height. The solitary, nodding, white to rose-colored flower grows in the axil of the leaves and has 6-9 waxy white petals, with many stamens. The nodding fruit is a large, fleshy, lemon-shaped berry.

Mayapple colonizes by rhizomes, forming dense mats in damp, open woods. The common name refers to the May blooming of its apple-blossom-like flower. Although the leaves, roots, and seeds are poisonous if ingested in large quantities, the roots were used as a cathartic by Native Americans. The edible, ripe, golden-yellow fruits can be used in jellies. The alternate popular name Mandrake rightly belongs to an unrelated Old World plant with a similar root.

PLANT CHARACTERISTICS

Duration: Perennial
Habit: Herb
Leaf Complexity: Simple
Leaf Venation: Palmate
Leaf Pubescence: Glabrous
Breeding System: Flowers Bisexual
Size Notes: Height: 12-18 inches
Leaf: Green
Flower: Flowers 2 inches
Fruit: Yellow, sometimes tinged with pink, rose, or purple 2 inches long
Size Class: 1-3 ft.

BLOOM INFORMATION

Bloom Color: White , Pink
Bloom Time: Mar , Apr , May
Bloom Notes: Flowers usually white, but some populations display pinkish, rosy, or purplish flowers. Pink/rose/purple-flowered plants are sometimes referred to as a separate form of this species: Deamii.

DISTRIBUTION

USA: AL , AR , CT , DC , DE , FL , GA , IA , IL , IN , KS , KY , LA , MA , MD , ME , MI , MN , MO , MS , NC , NE , NH , NJ , NY , OH , OK , PA , RI , SC , TN , TX , VA , VT , WI , WV
Canada: NS , ON , QC
Native Distribution: Que. & s. Ont. to FL, w. to MN, e. NE, e. KS & e. TX
Native Habitat: Mixed deciduous forest, shaded fields, shaded moist road banks, shaded riverbanks.
USDA Native Status: L48(N), CAN(N)

GROWING CONDITIONS

Water Use: Medium
Light Requirement: Part Shade , Shade
Soil Moisture: Moist
Soil pH: Acidic (pH<6.8)
Soil Description: Moist, humus-rich soils. Acid-based, Sandy, Sandy Loam, Medium Loam
Conditions Comments: Drought-tolerant within its eastern forest range, but should not be tried anywhere else. Grows under deciduous hardwoods, not under pines. Do not mix with other plants, as it does not like competition.

BENEFIT

Use Ornamental: Sometimes cultivated in woodland gardens.
Use Food: Ripe (yellow and soft) fruit is edible raw, but in limited quantity. Collect in August or September. The fruit has a lemon-like flavor and can be used to make jams, jellies and marmalade.
Use Medicinal: Native Americans used Podophyllum for a wide variety of medicinal purposes and as an insecticide (D. E. Moerman 1986).
Conspicuous Flowers: yes
Interesting Foliage: yes
PROPAGATION

Propagation Material: Root Division, Seeds
Description: Seeds should be planted immediately or they will need to be treated. Plant thickly. Seedlings take several years to mature. The easiest way to propagate is by root division while the plant is dormant. Divide the rhizomes in fall with at least one bud.
Seed Treatment: Cold-moist stratification for three months.
Commercially Avail: yes
Maintenance: Do not mow, as mowing will kill them.

SOURCE: http://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id_plant=POPE