

## *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).

**Warning:** POISONOUS PARTS: Unripe fruit, leaves, roots. Highly Toxic, May be Fatal if Eaten! Symptoms include salivation, vomiting, diarrhea, excitement, headache, fever, coma. Toxic Principle: Podophyllin.

**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](http://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id_plant=POPE)