



***Mitchella repens* L.**
Partridge-berry, Twinberry

Rubiaceae (Madder Family)

Blooming season:

June - July; sometimes flowering a second time in autumn (House Pt 2, p. 267)

Plant:

Perennial, evergreen, slightly woody.
Trailing or slightly ascending stems 15 - 37 cm long.
Numerous short branches.

Leaves:

Opposite, evergreen, short petioled.
Ovate-orbicular; somewhat heart shaped, blunted at apex; entire.
Small, 0.75 - 2.3 cm long.

Flower:

White, waxy, funnel shaped flowers.
In pairs, united at base, growing at tips of branches.
Fragrant, 4 lobed, densely bearded on inner side.
Anthers protrude from funnel; the 4 stamens attached to throat, alternating with lobes of corolla.
United ovaries, but individual corollas, pistils, and stamens.

Fruit:

Red "berries" (technically drupes).
Broader than long, 0.5 - 0.8 cm diameter.
One fruit formed by the joined ovaries of 2 flowers, leaving 2 "eyes".
Contain 8 "nutlets".
If not eaten, fruit survives winter and lasts until following summer.

Can be confused with:

Bearberry, *Arctostaphylos uva-ursi* L. (not found in Kasey Hartz Natural Area), with alternate, obovate leaves, and urn shaped flowers.





Mitchella repens L.

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Partridge-berry, Twinberry

Geographic range:

Type specimen location:

State: Throughout.

Regional: Nova Scotia to southern Quebec and Minnesota, south to Florida and Texas.

Habitat:

Local: Riparian, in drier areas.

Regional: Deciduous and mixed woods, also on hummocks in cedar swamps.

Common local companions:

Wintergreen, oaks, and maples.

Usages:

Human: Due to the tannin in leaves, they are astringent and have been used for that quality.

They were used by Native Americans, followed by the colonists, to promote menstruation and to facilitate childbirth by increasing uterine contractions, and as a diuretic.

Animal: The berries are eaten by ruffed grouse and small animals.

Why is it called *that*?

Mitchella honors Dr. John Mitchell (1680-1768), who left England as a young man to go to Virginia; he was a correspondent of Linnaeus. *Repens* means creeping, describing its growth habit. It is called partridge-berry from ruffed grouse (a relative of the European partridge) eating it.

Prepared by: Barbara Lukacs Grob December 2007