



***Trientalis borealis* (Raf.)  
Starflower**

*Primulaceae* (Primrose Family)

Blooming season: May through June

Plant:

Perennial, 8-29 cm high.

Extensively spread by tubers approximately 6-12 cm long, which send up simple branches.

Leaves:

One whorl, with leaves of different sizes in the same whorl - a distinguishing characteristic.

Usually 5-10 leaves, pointed at both ends 4-13 cm long and 1-3 cm wide.

Margins are “minutely crenulate” (House 1923, p. 214).

Flower:

White (occasionally pink), usually 7 petals and stamens (can be 5-9).

Usually 2 flowers, sharp-ended, 1-1.5 cm wide held above leaves.

Flower stalks grow from same point as leaves at summit of leaf-bearing stems.

Corolla united at base.

Fruit:

Small globular capsule, shorter than the sepals.

Can be confused with:

*Mediola virginiana*, which has **two** tiers of leaves.

Geographic range:

Type specimen location:

State: Most of Michigan, but less common in the south (Voss 1996).

Regional: eastern two-thirds of Canada, south to Virginia, Illinois, Minnesota and in the mountains to Georgia.

Habitat:

Local: Riparian.

Regional: Coniferous and deciduous woods and thickets, but able to persist in cutover woods (Voss 1996), preferring somewhat damp conditions.





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2

Common local companions:

Indian cucumber, maples, wintergreen, mayflower, and partridgeberry.

Usages:

Human:

Native Americans used the plant for many illnesses, including “consumption” (Vogel 1970).

Why is it called *that*?

The Latin *trientalis* is a measure of the height of the plant - one-third foot - but it generally grows taller. *Borealis* means northern, the plant’s geographic range. Its common name, Starflower, is most appropriate not only for its looks when blooming, but that the blossoms drop intact, like “fallen stars” (Voss 1996, p. 62).

Prepared by: Barbara Lukacs Grob December 2007