
NATURE RAMBLINGS

By Frank Thone



Trillium

An old proverb, known to folk of many tongues, declares that "all good things come in threes."

The trillium certainly keeps this rule, and the trillium is a very good thing, one of the finest flowers of the springtime woods. Its leaves are trefoils, its sepals are three, its shining petals are three, its stamens stand in two rings of three each, and the pistil at its center is three-angled, containing three seed-chambers. If the trillium were an Irish plant instead of an American, St. Patrick would certainly have used it in his famous argument with the chief whom he converted.

There are some thirty species of trillium in all, ranging across the United States, with a few in eastern Asia. There are none in Europe. Perhaps the handsomest is *Trillium grandiflorum*, which is fortunately also the most abundant. Its broad-petaled, open flowers form veritable galaxies through the rich, moist woods almost everywhere east of the Mississippi, and reach in more scattering fashion through the timber-strips along the streams in the prairie states. In the western part of its range, however, it has suffered from over-picking, and there are many children in the corn belt who have never seen a trillium.

In the South, growing in the hardwood "hammocks," there is another trillium, not quite so large-flowered as the *grandiflorum* species but worthy of note in another connection. It has decided tendency to depart from the fundamental rule of three, and very frequently will turn up with four leaves and four petals.

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