



HEATH FAMILY.

ERICACEAE.

Mountain Laurel.

Kalmia latifolia.

Found in rocky pastures, uplands and light woods, and swampy grounds, in June.

This is a large shrub varying in height from 4 to 8 feet, and occasionally taller. Its

stalk and branches are more or less twisted and angular in growth, and woody, of a fibre compact and tough; the old growths are covered with a roughened gray bark.

The beautiful leaf is evergreen; of an oval shape, with a tapering tip, an entire margin, strong midrib, a firm fine texture, and a smooth surface. The color is a fine dark green in the old growths, a light vigorous green when new. The leaves, on very short stems, are usually placed alternately, but are sometimes opposite each other, and toward the end of the branches are clustered.



The corolla is bowl-shaped, with 5 or 6 points; around the middle of this bowl are 10 little pockets,—each one of which holds the tip of a stamen until it is ready to spring out and scatter its pollen,—these pockets, or sacs, projecting on the outside of the bowl, form little spurs all around it. The color of the flower is white, or pink; in the bottom of the bowl a 10-pointed star is outlined in dark crimson, and flecks of crimson occur just above the little pockets. The tiny seed-box in the center is green; the elastic stamens are silky white; the little calyx is green; the flower-stems pale and sticky. The flowers form large and conspicuous clusters on the ends of the branches.

The flowers and buds have a pretty shell-like quality. Shortly after flowering, the vigorous light green shoots put forth, and the ripening seed-boxes take on a crimson hue, making the Laurel pasture all aglow a second time with rich color. This 5-angled seed-box, turned to brown, remains throughout the winter in pleasing contrast to the fine evergreen leafage.

Top photo: Cheri Tolson via <http://www.publicdomainpictures.net>

Bottom photo: ©David G. Smith, <http://delawarewildflowers.org>



MOUNTAIN LAUREL: *Kalmia latifolia*

Text and drawing excerpted from *Wildflowers from the North-Eastern States* by Ellen Miller and Margaret Christine Whiting, 1895
Nomenclature and Families updated.