



ARUM FAMILY.

ARACEÆ.

Skunk Cabbage.

Symplocarpus foetidus.

Found in March or early April, in damp meadows, and moist or swampy woodlands.

The leaves and hooded flower-clusters rise from the ground.



The large and conspicuous leaves, which do not unfold until the flowering season is past, vary from 1 to 2 feet in length, they are oval in shape with a blunt tip and heart-shaped base, have entire margins, firm texture, and smooth surfaces, and resemble the garden Day-Lily [*Editor's note: Day-Lily is an old common name for Hosta.*]. because of their many parallel ribs. In color a light clear green.

The unnoticeable 4-parted greenish-yellow flowers are gathered closely on a fleshy round club (that is about an inch in diameter) and enveloped by a protecting hood.

This hood is large and sharp-pointed, of a very thick and leathery texture, with a smooth and dull glossy surface ; it is a dull brown or mahogany color, mottled or streaked with darker purple or red. From 1 to 3 or 4 of these hood-protected flower-heads are crowded close together, along with the rolled up leaf, in the hold of several dull greenish or slightly purple leaf-like parts which serve as weather blankets wrapped about the whole plant.



After the flowers mature the hood shrivels and falls away, the blankets disappear, and the pointed leaf-bud then unfolds, the leaves pushing forth with fine springing curves. The strong odor of the plant prevents close observation, and denies to it the praise its growth deserves. In habit it is highly gregarious, and favorable meadows are thickly sprinkled with these rich-hued hoods of our earliest spring flower.

Top photo by cmadler (Own work) [CC BY-SA 3.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0>) or GFDL (<http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/fdl.html>)], via Wikimedia Commons

Lower photos: kbarton

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



SKUNK CABBAGE: *Symplocarpus foetidus*