

CARNATION FAMILY.

CARYOPHYLLACEAE.

Soapwort

Bouncing Bet.

Saponaria officinalis.

Found on dry soil, by the wayside and in the fields, blossoming in July through September.

The large leafy stalk, which grows from 1 to 2 feet high, is stout, slightly rough, and noticeably enlarged at the joints. Its color is green, or more often a dark crimson.

The oval leaf, tapering at the tip, clasps the stalk at the foot; it is 3-ribbed and the middle-rib being a little short the blade is fully to it on either side; it has a smooth surface, and is of a thick texture; the color is a grayish-green (usually dusty). The leaves are opposite in growth.

The flower is large, about 1 inch across, with 5 petals, broad and slightly notched at the top, and extended down into a narrow stem-like base, which is confined within the long cylindrical calyx; at the spread of the broad part of the petal are two little thread-like fringes. The color runs from white to pink, the 10 stamens are pale yellow, and the long, 5-notched calyx is a pale yellowish-green. The pistil divides at the tip into two curling spires.

Stocky and sturdy in growth, hearty and wholesome in nature, Bouncing Bet grows in great communities along the waysides, and railroad embankments; it is a little ragged in attire, owing to the habit the flowers have of drying up in the calyx. It looks its best under a gray sky.

Upper photo: TeunSpaans [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

Lower photo: Patrick J. Alexander, hosted by the USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database



BOUNCING BET: *Saponaria officinalis*.

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