



HEATH FAMILY.

ERICACEAE

Trailing Arbutus.

May flower.

Ground Laurel.

Epigæa repens.

Found in the woods, or clearings near woods, and upland pastures, during April. It particularly favors pine woods.

The branching leafy stalk is low, and trailing close to the ground under dry leaves and dead grass; it is tough and woody-fibred, and rough-hairy to the touch; rather slender. Its color is rusty brown, and very rich in tone.

The oval leaf is heart-shaped at the base, with a strong midrib which is somewhat taut and gives the entire margin usually an undulating character; the fibre is tough, and rough to the touch. The color is a strong positive green, more or less worm-eaten, and rust-spotted; it is evergreen. The leaves are set, on slender rough stems, alternately, at irregular intervals, and more closely near the flowers. The new leaves come after the blossoming time.



The flower has a tubular corolla, spreading into 5 rounded points; its color varies from an exquisite white to a deeply tinted rose; the inconspicuous stamens show only as a feathery, pale yellow ring in the centre. The 5-parted, pale green calyx is set around with 5 similar leafy bracts. The blossoms, on their little foot-stems, are gathered in close clusters along the ends of the stalk and branches. They exhale a sweet and spicy fragrance.

The plant, with its green and rusty leaves, hugs the earth so closely that often only the tips of the flowery clusters show here and there among the dried leaves, which almost conceal them from their friendly enemies, whose love of their beauty knows no better manner of exhibiting itself than by tearing the vine up by its roots. This selfish ignorance is fast exterminating the lovely flower in the populous districts of New England,—already it has become in certain places a mere tradition. As though in revenge, nature keeps fast the secret of its growth, and the Arbutus refuses to live in man's care for more than one or two seasons.

Photo credits: kbarton

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



ARBUTUS: *Epigaea repens*.