

BUTTERCUP FAMILY

RANUNCULACEÆ

Columbine.

Aquilegia Canadensis.



Found growing in the clefts of rocks, on sunlit heights, and along banks, during May or June.

The height of the stalk varies from 6 to 18 inches, and it branches widely; it is small, slightly enlarged at the joints, and somewhat square in shape, sometimes rough to the touch; the color is green, strongly tinged with purple-red.

The lower leaves are compound, with 3 leaflets, their margins round-toothed; the upper leaves are oval, or sometimes divided, their margins frequently entire; the texture is very thin and fine; the color light green. They are set on long, slender stems, or at the junction of the branches.



The flower varies a good deal in size; it consists of 5 tubular petals that are prolonged into slender spurs with rounded tips; the calyx is 5-parted, the divisions of a long oval shape, which curve closely between the spurs, alternating with the tubes. The color of the tubes is a pure and lovely yellow, which becomes, by a beautiful gradation, a deep red in the spurs, their tips even tending toward crimson; the calyx is orange-red, running to yellow-green at the stem; the many long stamens hanging in a central tassel are very yellow. The flower nods on the end of a curved stem, with its spurs uppermost.

In early spring the plant consists of a thick tuft of leaves. While still very small the bud begins to turn from pale green to reddish. In maturity the seed-pods become erect. The singular elegance of this plant is only too well appreciated, for human greed plucks it in reckless handfuls, without regard to its possible extinction.

Upper photo: © Francis R. Underwood 2016

Lower photo: kbarton



COLUMBINE: *Aquilegia Canadensis*.

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