

Podophyllum peltatum

North American Native



Podophyllum (pod-o-fil-lum) From the Greek anapodophyllum, , a duck, *podos*, a foot and *phyllon*, a leaf, referring to the leaves of *P. peltatum*, with the stalk attached away from the margin of the leaf blade and often in the center of it.

peltatum (pel-tah-tum) *peltate*, the leaves, shield-shaped.



Zones: 3 – 8 **Flower Color:** White **Height:** 8 – 20” **Spacing:** 6’

About the Species:

Common Name: May Apple **Family:** Berberidaceae

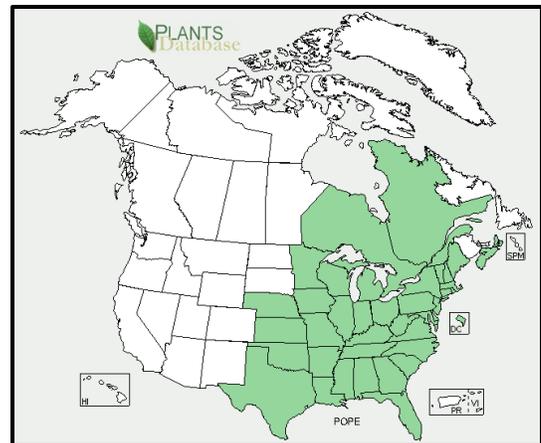
Large, rounded, umbrella-like leaves on 8-20” stalks shelter the 2” wide nodding white flower in April and May. Short-lived flowers produce an egg-shaped whitish berry that turns yellow when ripe. Flowers can be best seen when the plants are installed on slopes above a walk or path. It forms colonies from the creeping rhizomes and may advance up to 12” per year. May apple is drought tolerant but will go summer dormant unless it receives plenty of moisture.

Habitat: *Podophyllum peltatum* grows in low, moist or dry, open woods, and thickets.

In the Garden: Use for naturalizing in woodland settings, as a deciduous ground cover for large areas and tough locations, or in wild or native plant gardens. Plant in part shade to full shade in average, medium moisture, well-drained soil.

Umbrellas in the woods.

Podophyllum peltatum grow in large drifts in my woodland. A few are close to the brick wall of my house where I keep them thinned out. They have rhizomes that are easy to dig out except where they are entangled with the Christmas Fern roots. In the woods, they are easy to see before the trees leaf out. It’s interesting that after the flowers emerge, the deer will eat the flowers in some sections then come back and eat the leaf, leaving the stems that look like a bunch of Y’s. Strictly wild, this area has *Aster divaricatus*, *Asarum*, several kinds of ferns, *Aquilegia*, *Galium*, *Cimicifuga*, *Mertensia*, *Smilicina*, and other wildflowers like Dutchman’s Breeches, Showy Orchid, Trout Lilies, and Spring Beauties. Some were there when we built our house and left the dry shade area alone. Others were brought in and allowed to go wild. This is no-man’s-land; no additional watering and very little weeding. From the Blood Roots in the early spring to the *Asters* in the fall, there is always something that Mother Nature has provided us to admire.



USDA Plants Database

Other Uses: The rhizomes and leaves are poisonous and only the ripe fruits are edible. The fruits have a lemon-like flavor and may be eaten raw, cooked, dried, made into jelly, or the juice mixed with lemonade and sugar as a drink. Native Americans used the rhizomes as a purgative and the juice from the rhizomes as an ear drop to treat deafness. They would boil the plant and sprinkle it on potato plants to kill potato bugs. In my dry shade woodland, the deer eat the leaf first, then the flower, leaving a ‘y’ shaped stalk.