

# Stinking Benjamin (Red Trillium) *Trillium erectum*

**Plant Type:** Native Spring Ephemeral

**Sun Exposure:** Shade

**Season of Interest:** Spring

**Bloom Time:** Spring

**Bloom Color:** Red to Burgundy

**Height:** 8 to 14 in.

**Spread:** 12 in.

**Spacing:** 16 in.

**Water Needs:** Average

**Maintenance:** Very Little

**Soil Type:** Moist, High in organic matter

**Soil pH:** Acidic (pH < 6.0)

**Soil Drainage:** Well drained

**Pests:** Slugs (Deer & Rabbit resistant)

**Diseases:** None

**Wildlife:** None



**Description:** Few plants herald the coming of spring like trilliums. Easily recognizable by their distinct form, mature trilliums feature three leaves in a whorl on top of which sits the blossom, whose floral parts also appear in multiples of three.

Red trillium flowers sit on a short stalk above the foliage. A great deal of natural variation occurs, with the flower colors ranging from deep burgundy to cherry red and even to white. It is one of the earliest trilliums to bloom and sometimes suffers late frost damage. The fragrance of this flower has been described as similar to a wet dog. The flowers attract flies and ants as pollinators.

Red trillium can be found in southern Quebec and the Appalachian Mountain states. It prefers to grow in humus-rich cool soils, often in association with hemlocks, rhododendrons, and laurels. For more information see: [plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/trillium-erectum](http://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/trillium-erectum)

**Care and Growing Tips:** Trilliums bloom early and become dormant by midsummer, yet with suitable growing conditions they are easy to care for and long-lived in the garden. In order for them to thrive in the home garden, you must mimic their native habitat by providing moist, well-draining soil enriched with organic matter. These perennial wildflowers are ideal for shade gardens and wooded wildflower gardens.

Once established in the garden, trillium wildflowers require little maintenance or care. As long as they have been planted in a suitable location, you need only keep the soil evenly moist, but not soggy. They may also require water in very dry weather even if they are dormant. Fertilizer is not necessary as long as they have plenty of organic material or compost mixed into the soil. They benefit from an application of mulch compost in the fall.

