
Wildflower Spot - May 2009
John Clayton Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

WILD COMFREY

Cynoglossum virginianum

By Helen Hamilton, *President of the John Clayton Chapter, VNPS*

Wild comfrey is a rough, hairy perennial growing to 2 feet tall. The flower looks like a Forget-me-not, but it has large leaves which clasp the hairy stem. The leaves at the base are large and grow from the stem. The pale blue flowers have 5 corolla lobes and grow in clusters at the end of a stalk. This species is often abundant in moist woods in spring, following earlier blooming plants like the golden ragwort and violets.

This plant grows in upland woods from Connecticut to Oklahoma and south to Florida and Louisiana, and most of eastern United States and Canada. Wild comfrey blooms April-May in our area and its fruits (bristly nutlets) mature in the summer.

“Cynoglossum” was named from the Greek *cynos*, “of a dog”, and *glossa*, “tongue”, from the shape and texture of the leaves. Cherokee used the root tea for “bad memory”, cancer, itching of genitals and milky urine. Later, the leaves have been used as tobacco. ❖



Photo from Wikipedia



Photo: Wild Comfrey (*Cynoglossum virginianum*) taken by Helen Hamilton
For more information about native plants visit www.vnps.org.