Wildlife Viewing

Common Yukon roadside flowers

Yukon

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Additional resources

While this guide is an excellent place to start when identifying a Yukon wildflower, we do not recommend relying solely on it, particularly with reference to using plants as food or medicines. The following are some additional resources available in Yukon libraries and bookstores.

The Boreal Herbal: Wild Food & Medicine Plants of the North (2011). Gray, B. Aroma Borealis Press.

Field Guide to Alaska Wildflowers (2009).
Pratt, V.E. Alaskakrafts Publishing.

Flora of the Yukon Territory (1996).
Cody, W.J. NRC Research Press

Plants of Northern British Columbia (1999).
Mackinnon, A., Pojar, J. & R. Coupé, Lone Pine Publishing.

Wildflowers of the Yukon, Alaska and Northwestern Canada (2009). Trelawny, J. Harbour Publishing

A guide to common Yukon roadside flowers

Bog Laurel

Yukon is home to more than 1,250 species of flowering plants. Many of these plants are perennial (continuously living for more than two years). This guide highlights the flowers you are most likely to see while travelling by road through the territory. It describes 58 species of flowering plant, grouped by flower colour followed by a section on Yukon trees.

To identify a flower, flip to the appropriate colour section and match your flower with the pictures. Although it is often thought that Canada's north is a barren landscape, you'll soon see that it is actually home to an amazing diversity of unique flora.

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Four-parted Gentian

Introduction

Grizzly Bear eating dandelions.

Viewing etiquette

To be respectful of plants, their habitats and other wildlife, please follow these guidelines.

Avoid trampling. Follow trails and paths to avoid unnecessary trampling of vegetation. If you must move off the path, spread out to minimize the impact on one area.

Clean your boots and pants to avoid cross-contaminating areas. Seeds from invasive plants may cling to your pant cuffs, socks or boot bottoms and could be transferred to another area.

Watch for wildlife. Many flowers produce seeds and berries. Try not to disturb birds and wildlife while they are enjoying their feast.

Take only pictures. Many of these plants take years to bloom and picking them could kill the rest of the plant.

Pick up litter. Please leave an area as clean and undisturbed as possible, so that the next visitors can enjoy the same Yukon wildlife experience.

Bruce Bennett

A wildlife viewer takes home a souvenir of a unique plant, in the form of a great photo.

Peter Long

Foxtail Barley seeds can spread by sticking to clothing.

Yukon's territorial flower

Fireweed (*Chamaenerion angustifolium)* is the Yukon's official flower. Although it is found in most parts of Canada, it is a common plant here thanks to forest fires. As one of the first plants to colonize a landscape after a forest fire, Fireweed sets the hillsides ablaze with brilliant pinks and purples, a welcome reminder of the regrowth to come.

Peter Long

Fireweed is one of the first to bloom after a forest fire.

Fireweed is used in many locally produced products, such as honey, tea, salads and creams. One local brewery even makes a special ale with it.

However, Fireweed was not the first choice for the flower of the territory. At the urging of Martha Louise Black, an avid flower lover and well-respected resident of the time, Yukon adopted the Prairie Crocus (*Pulsatilla patens)* as its official flower in 1954. Mrs. Black felt the crocus represented the Yukon spirit because it is the first flower to appear as the snow melts. She felt Fireweed was too "common" to merit special status.

Unfortunately, Manitoba had laid claim to the Pasque-flower, as the Prairie Crocus is also known. Out of deference to Mrs. Black, the government waited until after she passed away in 1957 before naming the resilient Fireweed as Yukon's official flower.

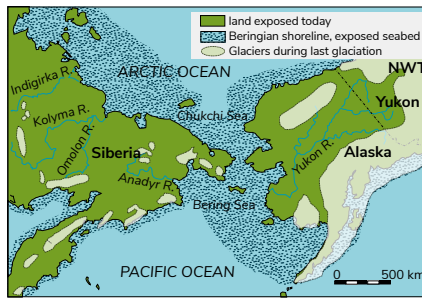
Peter Long

Prairie Crocus or Pasqueflower.

Unique Yukon flora

Some people think Canada's north is a harsh landscape with very little natural diversity. Boreal forests of evergreen trees do dominate the area, but a variety of habitats contain many unique and interesting plants.

During the Ice Age, a vast landscape in the Yukon remained unglaciated. Known as Beringia, many plants and animals continued to thrive here while much of Canada was buried under ice. The isolation of Beringia allowed some plants to evolve so that they are found no place else on earth. This has made the Yukon one of the richest floral regions in Canada.



Adapted from Hopkins et al., 1982, Paleoecology of Beringia.

Extent of ice flow during recent glaciation.

Martin Owen

Yukon Draba is only found in southwest Yukon and nowhere else on earth.

Bruce Bennett

Yukon Goldenweed is one of five Yukon plants found nowhere else on earth.

Baikal Sedge needs specific habitat, such as the Carcross Dunes, to survive. It is listed as Special Concern *in Canada.*

Peter Long

Yukon invaders

This guide includes descriptions of the most common wildflowers you may see, whether they are native or introduced.

Lloyd Freese

Common Tansy is mildly toxic and emits a pungent smell when crushed.

Invasive plants and animals are one of the greatest threat to biodiversity. Of the 201 plant species introduced to the Yukon, a few have the potential to negatively affect Yukoners or native species. While some of these invasive plants may have beautiful flowers, they have the ability to crowd out native species, alter water flow on the landscape, increase fire frequency, or have other negative effects.

In order to keep native Yukon plants healthy and abundant, please take care to not transplant or spread new species around the territory.

Bruce Bennett

Perennial Sow-thistle is an invasive plant that spreads long distances by wind-blown seed.

Bruce Bennett

Great Blanket Flower, a garden plant that has gone wild.

Pink Flowers

Raup's Paintbrush
Castilleja raupii | Broomrape Family

Bruce Bennett

The purplish-pink flowers look like they have been dipped in paint, giving this plant its common name. Raup's Paintbrush is a parasitic plant, feeding on the roots of other plants. A similar species, Yukon Paintbrush *(Castilleja yukonis var. yukonis)* has yellow flowers and can be found in southern Yukon. There are eight species of paint-brush in the Yukon.

Twinflower
Linnaea borealis | Honeysuckle Family

Peter Long

This creeping evergreen gets its common name from its paired, small, sweet-smelling pink flowers that hang from slender Y-shaped stalks. However, Twinflower is perhaps more celebrated for its scientific name, *Linnaea*. This delicate flower, the favourite of 18th century Swedish botanist Carl Linnaeus, founder of the modern scientific naming system, was named for him. Twinflower grows in both forested areas and meadows, and can tolerate shade well.

Kinnikinnick

Arctostaphylos uva-ursi | Heath Family

This trailing evergreen shrub is common on rocky outcrops and dry forest floors throughout Yukon, often forming mats. The name Kinnikinnick, meaning "mixture" in the Chinook trading language, refers to the use of the leaves of this plant in smoking mixtures. The small, pink, urn-shaped flowers give way to bright red berries that are edible, but dry and mealy.

Bruce Bennett

Mountain Cranberry, Low-bush Cranberry

Vaccinium vitis-idaea ssp. minus | Heath Family

This small, mat-forming evergreen shrub is one of the most well-known Yukon plants. The small pink or white flowers give way to edible, shiny, dark red berries that ripen in late August or September. The berries can be somewhat acidic but sweeten dramatically after the first frost. Berries can be eaten raw or used in baking and for jams and jellies.

Peter Long

What's the difference?

Mountain Cranberry (left) and Kinnikinnick (right) are low sprawling plants that form mats on the forest floor. Mountain Cranberry leaves are oval with notched tips, a prominent midvein, and rounded at both ends. Kinnikinnick has longer leaves that taper towards the stem. Its berries develop earlier and are orange-red compared to the soft burgundy-red of the Mountain Cranberry.

Peter Long

Peter Long

Pink Flowers

Fireweed

Chamaenerion angustifolium | Evening Primrose Family

This bright, showy plant is the Yukon's territorial flower. Called "Fireweed" because of its sudden abundance in areas cleared by forest fire, this plant readily colonizes roadsides, meadows and gravel bars. In forests, plants can often be seen in their much less conspicuous non-flowering form, waiting for fire to clear out the shading trees. Every part of the Fireweed plant is edible, and the nectar-rich flowers produce high-grade honey.

River Beauty

Chamerion latifolium | Evening Primrose Family

Adolf Ceska

This low-growing bushy plant is closely related to, and greatly resembles, Fireweed. River Beauty blooms in July and August, creating swaths of bright pink along roadsides, in river-bars and on mountain sides. Like its bigger relative, River Beauty is also edible.

Peter Long

Prickly Rose

Rosa acicularis | Rose Family

This small shrub has prickly stems and large, fragrant pink, solitary flowers, and is widespread at low to medium elevations throughout the Yukon. Late in the summer, flowers become large rosehips that are edible and high in vitamin C. Before eating rosehips, open them and discard the spiny seeds. Rosehips can also be made into tasty jams and jellies.

Peter Long

Dwarf Raspberry, Nagoon Berry

Rubus arcticus ssp. acaulis | Rose Family

This creeping dwarf shrub gives rise to pretty deep pink or purple flowers. In late July and August, deep red, edible berries appear that provide a tasty snack and make excellent jam, if you have enough patience to find the sparse fruit. The Latin name, *acaulis*, means stemless, referring to the absence of a woody stem.

Bruce Bennett

Peter Long

White Flowers

Jakutsk Snow-parsley

Conioselinum cnidiifolium | Carrot Family

Bruce Bennett

Jakutsk Snow-parsley grows on roadsides, gravelly river banks and meadows in both wet and dry areas of central and western Yukon. It is named after the city of Jakutsk (Yakutsk) in Siberia, where it was first described. To be safe, don't taste it – the closely related, but poisonous, Mackenzie's Water Hemlock (*Cicuta virosa*) grows across the Yukon as well.

Distintive leaves at the base of the plant.

Cow Parsnip

Heracleum maximum | Carrot Family

Peter Long

This robust perennial is widespread on stream banks and moist, ground. It has large, rhubarb-sized leaves. Small, white flowers grow in clusters at the top of hollow stems and give off a strong, unpleasant odor that attracts flies. Cow Parsnip is not poisonous, unlike the closely related Spotted Water Hemlock (*Cicuta maculata*) which contains cicutotoxin, a deadly poison. Yet care should be taken when touching Cow Parsnip as some people may experience pain, itching or blistering from direct skin contact.

Dorothy Cooley

Northern Bedstraw

Galium boreale | Coffee Family

This pleasant-smelling perennial plant is found in open dry areas such as meadows and roadsides. It is a member of the Coffee Family, and its fruits can be roasted and used as a caffeine-free coffee substitute. The leaves and roots have also been used to make tea.

Peter Long

Dwarf Dogwood, Bunchberry

Cornus canadensis | Dogwood Family

Peter Long

Bunchberry gets its name from the tight cluster of bright-red berries that develop in early August. These berries replace the inconspicuous, small, purple true flowers that lie closely-packed at the centre of the white "flower." This white flower is not actually a flower at all, but rather four white bracts that are modified leaves. A common sight on moist forest floors, it can be seen along many of the Yukon's wooded trails.

Bruce Bennett

Bunchberries in fall.

White Flowers

Scheuchzer's Cottongrass

Eriophorum scheuchzeri | Sedge Family

Terry McIntosh

This circumpolar species is not a true grass, despite its name. Cottongrass is easily recognized when going to seed by the fluffy tufts that resemble cotton batting. The "cotton" is actually a collection of long white hairs that help the seeds disperse in the wind. In the past, cottongrass has been used for everything from stuffing pillows to dressing wounds. The Yukon is home to nine species of cottongrass.

Labrador Tea

Rhododendron groenlandicum | Heath Family

Peter Long

This evergreen shrub is easily identified, with or without flowers, by its distinctive leaves: glossy dark green above, with rust-coloured, hairy undersides. The closely related species, Trapper's Tea (*Rhododendron tomentosum*), is a smaller plant with narrower leaves, and is also found throughout the Yukon. Both species are used to make a distinctive tea, though *Rhododendrum tomentosum* is more sought after and said to give the nicest flavour.

White Sweetclover

Melilotus albus | Pea Family

Dorothy Cooley

White Sweetclover is one of the Yukon's most problematic invasive plants. This plant can grow to a height of two metres, although most plants are less than one metre tall. A single plant can produce 300,000 seeds, which can remain viable in water or soil for over 80 years. Already widespread throughout southern Yukon, this plant readily invades gravelly, well-drained soils, such as roadsides, riverbanks, and gravel bars. Along with its close relative, Yellow Sweetclover (*Melilotus officinalis*), White Sweetclover alters soil conditions by fixing nitrogen, out-competes native plants, degrades natural grasslands, and can alter sedimentation rates in rivers.

Mountain Death Camas

Anticlea elegans | Bunchflower Family

Bruce Bennett

This ominously named flower contains the poisonous alkaloid zygadine. If ingested, Mountain Death Camas causes vomiting, decreased body temperature, difficulty breathing and coma. This plant is widespread in the Yukon and grows in poplar forests and open meadows. Depending on elevation, it flowers from late June to August.

Peter Long

White Flowers

Wild Strawberry
Fragaria virginiana | Rose Family

Stefan Gottermann

Found in forests and open meadows, Wild Strawberries often form small colonies. In July, the small white flowers are replaced by edible juicy red fruit that contains more vitamin C, gram for gram, than oranges. This species is the original parent of 90 per cent of all cultivated strawberries now grown. The related species, Beach Strawberry (*Fragaria chiloensis*), is the original parent of the remaining 10 per cent.

Bruce Bennett

Mountain Avens
Dryas integrifolia | Rose Family

Bruce Bennett

Mountain Avens has evergreen leaves that form a mat over hard surfaces. It is a hardy species that colonizes rocky, barren slopes, gravelly areas and river flats where it can dominate tundra communities. Blooming in June and July, the flowers and seeds were used by some First Nations people to make a bright green dye. The Eight-petalled Mountain Avens (*Dryas ajanensis*) is the territorial flower of the Northwest Territories. Yellow Mountain Avens (*Dryas drummondii*) is common in southwest Yukon.

Alaska Wild-rhubarb

Koenigia alaskana | Buckwheat Family

Bruce Bennett

Alaska Wild-rhubarb is usually found growing in showy clumps on roadsides or other disturbed sites. Flowers are yellowish-white or cream coloured. The young stems and leaves of this plant are edible (unlike the related Garden Rhubarb (*Rheum rhabarbarum*), that has poisonous leaves).

Peter Long

Sparrow's-egg Lady's-slipper, Northern Lady's-slipper

Cypripedium passerinum | Orchid Family

Peter Long

Blooming in late June or early July, this plant can be found in sphagnum bogs, gravel outwashes, and wet talus. The distinctive white, pouch-shaped flower has dark purple spots on the inside that are occasionally visible. This plant can take up to 15 years to flower. It is one of three species of lady's-slipper in the Yukon.

White Flowers

Bog Buckbean
Menyanthes trifoliata | Buckbean Family

Bruce Bennett

This circumpolar plant prefers bogs and wet lakeshores. The white flowers appear hairy, and grow in clusters at the top of the plant. A tea made from the dried roots or leaves can be used to treat digestive problems, and to relieve fever and migraine headaches. However, in high doses this plant has a laxative effect. The foliage is similar to broad beans, which may have given rise to its name. The rhizomes were often used by Alaska natives to make emergency bread for survival.

Cut-leaf Anemone
Anemone multifida | Buttercup Family

Bruce Bennett

This plant is common on gravelly roadsides and dry slopes throughout southern Yukon. Flowers can be white, yellow, pink, purple, or even bright red. A similar plant with creeping roots, the Northern Anemone (*Anemone parviflora*) grows in moister, shaded areas. Anemones are also called “Wind Flowers” from the Latin word for wind: *anemos*. Cut-leaf Anemone flowers from May to July and is the most common of the seven species of anemone in the Yukon.

Peter Long

Marsh Grass-of-Parnassus, Bog Star

Parnassia palustris | Bittersweet Family

This perennial plant prefers wet, open places. It occurs in wet tundra or along lake shores and riparian areas such as river banks. The flower's petals are about twice the length of its sepals (arrow). It owes its name to a description of a grass-like plant growing on the side of Mount Parnassus. When the ancient Greek description was translated, this "grass" was taken to be *Parnassia palustris*. Although this was likely a mistake since *Parnassia* are not grasslike, the name persists.

Peter Long

Peter Long

Two other types of Parnassia are (left) P. fimbriata *– with showy fringes on the petals – and (right)* P. kotzebuei *(with sepals and petals about the same size).*

Prickly Saxifrage, Three-toothed Saxifrage

Saxifraga tricuspidata | Saxifrage Family

This plant is named for its leaves that are rigid and leathery with three pointed, tooth-like lobes at the end. If you look closely at the small white flowers, you can see they are dotted with small red-orange spots. This common saxifrage is found in dry, rocky areas throughout the Yukon.

Peter Long

White Flowers

Common Yarrow

Achillea millefolium | Sunflower Family

Bruce Bennett

This aromatic plant is found along roadsides and growing in gravely and sandy soils throughout the Yukon, especially in the south. Because of its usefulness, this plant was one of the first plants ever named. Common Yarrow was named for Achilles, who used the leaves to staunch wounds. It is a natural insect repellent, and can be boiled to relieve congestion.

Tufted Fleabane

Erigeron caespitosus | Sunflower Family

Peter Long

This aster-like plant is adapted to dry, gravelly soils and can dominate grasslands in southwest Yukon. The name "fleabane" was given to this species because it was believed that bunches of the dried plant hung indoors would drive out fleas. During the last ice age, Tufted Fleabane was separated from the rest of its range on the Great Plains of southern Canada.

Asteraceae: The Sunflower Family, the largest Family of flowering plants in the world, has 125 species in the Yukon. This widespread family is most common in temperate regions, in open and dry environments. Lettuce, Artichoke, Ragweed and Echinacea are also members of the Sunflower Family.

Yellow Flowers

Northern Goldenrod

Solidago multiradiata | Sunflower Family

This perennial herb is one of the most common and widespread species on the alpine tundra. It is also common in open forests, meadows, slopes, and gravel bars throughout the Yukon. Solidago is a group of medicinal plants. Translated from Latin, the name means to make (ago) whole (solidus).

Peter Long

Narrow-leaved Arnica

Arnica angustifolia | Sunflower Family

Found in dry, sandy, gravelly places and open forests, Narrow-leaved Arnica ranges throughout the Yukon. The name arnica comes from the Greek word “arna” meaning lamb, and refers to the white hairs on the leaves and stalks of this plant. Many species of arnica have been used in Europe and North America as topical herbal remedies for everything from bruises to hair loss. Arnica should not be ingested; it can be fatal in large quantities.

Peter Long

Yellow Flowers

Mastodon Flower, Marsh Fleabane

Tephroseris palustris | Sunflower Family

This circumpolar plant prefers wet places and disturbed areas, and can grow to one metre in height. Its numerous small yellow flowers appear together in large “congested” tight clusters. The young leaves and flowering stems are edible and can be added to salad.

Adolf Ceska

Pasture Sage

Artemisia frigida | Sunflower Family

This distinctive, hairy, silvery-green plant has small, pale yellow flower heads, but is easily recognized when not in bloom. Common in dry rocky slopes, grasslands and sandy areas, this plant gives off a strong fragrance when crushed. Although it is not closely related to commercial cooking sage, it can be used in cooking as a substitute. Pasture Sage can also be burned as a means of driving away insects.

Peter Long

Narrowleaf Hawksbeard

Crepis tectorum | Sunflower Family

This invasive plant occurs throughout the Yukon along all major highways. Unlike the similar looking dandelion, Narrowleaf Hawksbeard grows a single, sometimes branched, stem from a small taproot that is easily pulled from the ground. It does not compete well in undisturbed sites, but readily colonizes frequently disturbed areas such as roadsides and rivers.

Bruce Bennett

Horned Dandelion

Taraxacum ceratophorum | Sunflower Family

This native dandelion gets its name from its visible horned bracts. It is more widespread than the introduced dandelion, *Taraxacum officinale*, that plagues residential lawns. Dandelions get their name from the French description of their leaves: “dent de lion” or “lion’s teeth,” referring to the toothed leaves. Young leaves can be eaten raw or cooked as a green vegetable, however, the leaves become bitter with age. Yukon is home to at least four native species of dandelion that range in colour from white through pink to almost purple.

Peter Long

Arrows point to the bracts. (left) T. officinale *has reflexed or bent back bracts. (right)* T. ceratophorum *has erect horned bracts.*

Bruce Bennett

Yellow Flowers

Silverberry, Wolf Willow

Elaeagnus commutata | Oleaster Family

This shrub spreads rapidly into disturbed areas, forming large patches of silvery leaves and berries. The Donjek River (Dän Zhür Chù) in southwest Yukon was named for the Silverberry plants that line the river banks. The flowers are extremely fragrant and the large seeds have been used as decorative beads.

Peter Long

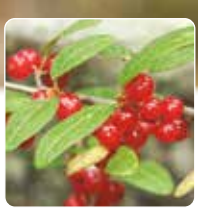
Soapberry, Soopolallie

Shepherdia canadensis | Oleaster Family

In early spring, tiny yellowish-brown flowers bloom on both male (pictured) and female Soapberry shrubs. In late June, the female flowers produce bitter red berries which, when whipped into a froth, become an ice cream-like dessert.

Soapberry and Silverberry are both important wild animal foods, particularly for bears, birds, and voles.

Peter Long



Labrador Lousewort

Pedicularis labradorica | Broomrape family

This distinctive plant can be found in open mossy places on tundra. The pure yellow variety *sulphurea* is unique to the Yukon. Labrador Lousewort is a root parasite, drawing nutrients away from the roots of neighbouring plants.

Bruce Bennett

Yellow Water Lily

Nuphar polysepalum | Water Lily Family

These showy flowers can be found on ponds, shallow lakes and slow-moving streams in forested parts of the Yukon. The rhizomes of Yellow Water Lilies are an important food source for beaver, muskrat, and moose. They can be sliced thinly and dried for human consumption.

John Meikle

Northern Yellow Locoweed

Oxytropis campestris | Pea Family

This densely tufted, hairy plant can be found in dry, sandy, gravelly places. Northern Yellow Locoweed contains the alkaloid swainsonine and is extremely toxic. Locoweed is named for the disease “Locoism” in which livestock appear mentally disordered, and experience paralysis and impaired vision as a result of poisoning from these plants.

Peter Long

Bruce Bennett

Purple/Blue Flowers

Siberian Aster
Eurybia sibirica | Sunflower Family

Bruce Bennett

This plant prefers gravelly river areas, dry meadows and open forests. Asters are eaten by a number of wildlife species, especially deer and moose.

Tall Lungwort, Bluebells
Mertensia paniculata | Borage Family

Bruce Bennett

This flower is recognized by branched clusters of drooping bell-shaped flowers, which give this plant its common name. Preferring moist areas, it can be found in forests and meadows and along stream banks.
Its leaves are edible and a tasty addition to a summer salad.

Showy Crazyweed, Showy Locoweed
Oxytropis splendens | Pea Family

Adolf Ceska

Peter Long

This bright plant can be found on dry, sandy, and shady slopes. Most *Oxytropis* species are toxic, and if ingested by livestock, result in the disease "Locoism" (see Northern Yellow Locoweed). However, bears eat this plant in the spring with no obvious ill effects.

Bear-root, Indian Potato

Hedysarum americanum | Pea family

Bruce Bennett

This tall Hedysarum is both beautiful and an important food source. It can be found along roadsides, on rocky slopes and gravel bars, and in forests. Its carbohydrate-rich roots are edible and, when roasted or boiled, taste similar to potatoes or young carrots. The roots of *Hedysarum americanum* are an important food source for Grizzly Bears, but humans must be cautious not to confuse Bear-root with Northern Sweet-vetch.

Northern Sweet-vetch, Wild Sweet-pea

Hedysarum boreale ssp. mackenziei | Pea Family

Hedysarum boreale is reported to be poisonous. The visible differences between it and Bear-root are subtle: Northern Sweet-vetch has a long, thin, linear calyx while the Bear-root calyx is triangular or deltoid shaped.

Left: Long, thin calyx of boreale.
Right: Deltoid-shaped calyx of alpinum.

Poisonous plants: Be extremely cautious when identifying potentially edible plants. Some delicious plants have deadly cousins that are quite similar in appearance. Confusion between the nearly identical Hedysarum species was suspected in the poisoning of Sir John Richardson's arctic expedition of 1820. It was also thought to be the cause of death for Chris McCandless, whose story is told in the book and movie *Into the Wild*. However, recent studies have determined that this plant is not as toxic as previously thought, leaving the deaths of these men a mystery.

Peter Long

Northern Sweet-vetch.

Purple/Blue Flowers

Lupines: As with many species of the Pea Family (Fabaceae), lupines are poisonous and have been known to kill animals that have eaten them. All three lupines found in the Yukon are shades of purple and their differences are subtle. Yukon and Nootka lupines have small hairs on the upper surface of their leaves, while Arctic Lupine's leaves are bare. The three lupines occupy unique habitats. Yukon Lupines are found only in loose sandy soils of south-central and southwest Yukon, and Nootka Lupines only in the mountains of southwest Yukon, including the White Pass and Haines Pass. But Arctic Lupines can be found throughout the territory.

Arctic Lupine

Lupinus arcticus | Pea Family

Peter Long

Arctic Lupine is one of the most common wildflowers in the Yukon. The Latin name, Lupinus, is derived from *Lupus*, or wolf, alluding to the early belief that Lupines were "wolfing" nutrients from the soil. Yet Lupines improve the soil by adding nitrogen and organic matter.

Yukon Lupine

Lupinus kuschei | Pea Family

Bruce Bennett

Yukon Lupine can be found in abundance in the Carcross dunes. This species of lupine is thought to have evolved in Beringia, and is only known from sites in the Yukon, Alaska and northwestern British Columbia.

Nootka Lupine

Lupinus nootkatensis | Pea Family

Bruce Bennett

Nootka Lupine, occurs in the mountain passes of the Haines Road and South Klondike Highway, and usually produces taller stems with more flowers.

Wild Flax

Linum lewisii | Flax Family

Wild Flax ranges from northern Mexico to the Canadian arctic archipelago. Flowers bloom along a very long, slender stem with long leaves. It can survive in very dry, salty or cold soils, making it an excellent plant for use in gardens and maintenance-free landscaping. Commercial linseed oil comes from another species of *Linum*.

Peter Long

Dragonhead

Dracocephalum parviflorum | Mint Family

This plant is named for its cluster of small flowers (*parviflorum*) that grow at the head of the plant and are said to resemble a dragon's (Draco) head (cephalum). This plant grows for one or two years and can be found throughout Canada and the northern U.S. in disturbed sites, particularly after burns.

Bruce Bennett

Purple/Blue Flowers

Calypso, Lady's Slipper

Calypso bulbosa | Orchid Family

Peter Long

This stupdendouly beautiful plant is found among the moss on shaded forest floors. It is appropriately named after Calypso, the sea-nymph daughter of Atlas in Greek mythology, whose name means "she who hides." It is a delicate, fragrant, pinky-purple flower that sits above a spotted lip or "slipper." Calypso is very susceptible to trampling as it has thin fragile roots. It grows with the help of a fungus, so, if transplanted, usually dies or rarely flowers again.

Showy Jacob's Ladder

Polemonium pulcherrimum | Phlox Family

Peter Long

This pretty tufted plant has small lavender (sometimes white) flowers that bloom in early June. The name Jacob's Ladder refers to the ladder-like arrangement of the leaves. The scientific name *pulcherrimum* means "very handsome" and is a fitting description of this popular plant. Showy Jacob's Ladder prefers dry, rocky, or sandy areas. Two other types of Jacob's Ladder call Yukon home: Boreal Jacob's Ladder (*P. boreale*), found in the alpine, and Tall Jacob's Ladder (*P. acutiflorum*), found in wet areas.

Adolf Ceska

Northern Monkshood

Aconitum delphiniifolium | Buttercup Family

Northern Monkshood is named for its dark blue or purple flowers that are shaped like the hood of a monk's robe. All parts of this plant are extremely poisonous, especially the roots and seeds. They contain the deadly poisons aconitine and aconine, which cause loss of feeling, sweating, decreased body temperature, respiratory difficulties and, in high doses, cardiac arrest.

Prairie Crocus, Pasqueflower

Pulsatilla patens | Buttercup Family

Peter Long

Arguably the most popular Yukon flower, for many Yukoners the emergence of the Prairie Crocus in late April or early May signals spring's arrival. The entire surface of the plant, including the flowers, is covered in fuzzy white hairs. These are crucial to the plant's survival in the chilly months of spring. Insects will often take refuge inside the flowers, where it can be 10°C warmer than the surrounding air.

Purple/Blue Flowers

Gorman's Beardtongue

Penstemon gormanii | Plantain Family

Bruce Bennett

This species of penstemon is found only in southwest Yukon, west-central Alaska and northern British Columbia. Gorman's Beardtongue prefers dry, sandy or gravelly sites. The name beardtongue refers to the hairy tongue-like lower lip of the flowers. Penstemon refers to its five (pent) stamens (stemon). Four of these stamens are fertile and one is sterile. In 1899, Martin Gorman, from Oregon, was the first western botanist to collect the plant.

Foxtail Barley

Hordeum jubatum | Grass Family

Peter Long

This perennial tufted plant has feathery green to purple awns that have a distinctive rippling appearance in the breeze. Many people find these awns attractive but they can cause physical harm. The awns are barbed and will work their way into the eyes, nose, gums and throats of animals, both domestic and wild. Foxtail Barley is native to the Yukon and, while not technically an invasive plant, it behaves the same way. It follows human disturbance and is particularly aggressive in the dry alkaline soil of southern Yukon where it causes problems for farmers.

Green Flowers

Northwest Territory Sedge

Carex utriculata | Sedge Family

Adolf Ceska

This large plant prefers wet areas at low to moderate elevations. Sedges are often confused with grasses, but here is a helpful rhyme for telling them apart: "Sedges have edges, rushes are round, and grasses are hollow, like holes in the ground."
The "edges" of sedges can be felt by rolling the stalk between two fingers. Northwest Territory Sedge is an important food source for waterbirds and muskrat. Nearly one in ten of Yukon's flowers are sedges: a total of 120 species.

Smooth Brome

Bromus inermis | Grass Family

Bruce Bennett

Smooth Brome is an introduced and invasive plant in the Yukon. Its ability to suppress all other native species by forming a thick mat of rhizomes also makes it an important hay crop. It is found in every Yukon community except Old Crow, as well as along most Yukon highways where it was seeded to stop erosion and discourage willow growth. If found far from roads or rivers, Smooth Brome is likely the legacy of a long-abandoned farm or settlement.

Trees

Deciduous trees lose their leaves in the fall

Trembling Aspen *Populus tremuloides* | Willow Family

Trembling Aspen has oval-shaped leaves with flat stems that easily catch the breeze and tremble. Leaves are often covered with tracks of the Aspen Leaf Miner insect.

Peter Long

Balsam Poplar *Populus balsamifera* | Willow Family

Balsam Poplar is a tall tree with spade-shaped leaves. Its smooth, green bark blackens and cracks with age. Fragrant spring buds make the famous "Balm of Gilead."

Peter Long

Willow Species *Salix* species | Willow Family

There are over 45 species of willow in Yukon but only 10 grow large enough to be considered trees. Felt-Leaved Willow (*Salix alaxensis*), the most widespread of all the tree-like willows, is found throughout the Yukon, as far north as the coast.

Bruce Bennett

Alaska Paper Birch *Betula neoalaskana* | Birch Family

Birch trees have thin, papery bark ranging in colour from copper brown to white. Alaska Paper Birch has adapted to reduce Snowshoe Hare browsing by producing distasteful glands on its branches.

Stefan Gottermann

Speckled Alder *Alnus incana* | Birch Family

Of the two species of alder in the Yukon, only Speckled Alder reaches tree size.

Peter Long

Subalpine Fir *Abies lasiocarpa* | Pine Family

Remy Rodden

The Subalpine Fir is usually found at high altitudes. Its needles are flat and reach upward. The Subalpine Fir is the Yukon's territorial tree.

White Spruce *Picea glauca* | Pine Family

White Spruce is has short, sharply pointed, four-sided needles on all sides of white, smooth, horizontal branches. It is found in well-drained, dry soils.

Black Spruce *Picea mariana* | Pine Family

Bruce Bennett

Black Spruce has shorter needles and rounder cones than White Spruce. Its drooping lower branches are covered with reddish hairs, while its upper branches are clumped together, looking like giant bird nests.

Tamarack *Larix laricina* | Pine Family

Bruce Bennett

This tree has short needles that grow in clusters along branches. Like all Larch trees, the needles turn yellow and fall off in autumn, making this a deciduous conifer.

Lodgepole Pine *Pinus contorta* | Pine Family

Peter Long

Lodgepole is the only type of pine found in the Yukon. Its long needles are in pairs that resemble tweezers. The cones are sealed shut, only opening with the intense heat of a forest fire.

Yukon Podistera (Podistera yukonensis) —
Yukon hosts about 90% of the world's population.

Yukon Conservation Data Centre

How you can help:

You can contribute to our knowledge of Yukon's flora by reporting your sightings of rare plants to the Yukon Conservation Data Centre. Visit **yukon.ca/report-rare-yukon-species-sighting** for information on how you can help.

Who are we:

The Yukon Conservation Data Centre (CDC) is a member of a network of data centres and Natural Heritage Programs around the world, coordinated by NatureServe International.

What we do:

The Yukon CDC gathers, maintains, and distributes information on animals, plants, and ecological communities at risk or of conservation concern in the Yukon.

Why do we do it?

Accurate information about species and ecosystems at risk is essential to effectively manage, conserve, and protect our natural resources. The Yukon CDC provides a central, reliable, and continually updated source for this information.

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