

Prairie violet (*Viola pedatifida*)

Family: Violet (*Violaceae*)

DESCRIPTION: One of about 20 native Minnesota violets, prairie violet is fairly widespread in prairies and savannas. An early bloomer of short stature (3 to 6 inches), it is well-suited for medium to dry gardens, edges, and prairie and savanna restorations.

USES: Violets bring a splash of color to the early spring landscape. They provide important early nectar and pollen for small bees, flies, butterflies and skippers. Violets are a host plant for multiple species of Fritillary butterfly caterpillars. Prairie violet works as a ground cover along with other violet species and short prairie plants. It's a good choice for garden edges, groupings or in mass borders where it won't get crowded out. Violets are an important component of prairie and savanna restorations.

REFERENCES:
[Minnesota Wildflowers](#)
[The Friends of the Wild Flower Garden](#)



Range Map: NRCS Plants Database



Photo Credit: Prairie Moon Nursery

Planting Recommendations

Prairie violet is not aggressive like some other violet species. It prefers well-drained soils and can be found in prairies, savannas and open woods. Seeds and containerized or bare-root stock are available from native plant nurseries. Growing from seed requires a 60-day cold stratification and light; seeds should remain uncovered. Another option is fall sowing on

bare ground. Seed is not always produced by the upright, showy violet-blue flowers, which depend on insect pollination. More often, seed is produced by the closed, self-pollinating flowers without petals found near ground level. These short plants need some space, as they can be crowded out by taller, more robust plants or smothered by too much accumulated dead vegetation.

STATEWIDE WETLAND INDICATOR STATUS: FACU

ID: Prairie violet produces both petalled, insect-pollinated (chasmogamous) and petalless, self-pollinating (cleistogamous) flowers. Showy, five-petalled, blue-violet to purple flowers grow 0.75 inch to 1 inch long. The two lateral petals are white at the base with tufts of white hairs, which makes them "bearded." The lower petal's white patch and purple lines guide insects to nectar. The flowers without petals look like green buds. Deeply lobed leaves grow up to 2 inches long, often wider than they are long. Young or smaller, late-season leaves are more shallowly lobed. Brown seed capsules eject the seeds, which are also dispersed by ants.

SIMILAR SPECIES: Prairie and birdfoot violets (*Viola pedata*) look similar and grow in similar habitats. Birdfoot violets are beardless, produce larger flowers and are found in southeastern Minnesota. Prairie violets' range stretches north into Canada. Violet species freely hybridize with close relatives, often resulting in puzzling individuals and populations.

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