

**White Trout Lily (*Erythronium albidum*)
Yellow Trout Lily (*Erythronium americanum*)**



Reflections

Seen and Unseen aspects of the Life of the Trout Lily

The Trout Lily is a spring ephemeral that is briefly seen above ground and then continues an active life under the soil for most of the year. Under the ground the plant spreads because stolens or runners grow from the main corm and form new tiny corms. It depends on its stored food reserve to give it energy to grow another year.

In spring large colonies of leaves appear above the ground. Many send up single leaves but not flowers. Those leaves manufacture food for the young corms to store.

It takes seven or eight years for a plant to grow sufficiently mature before a bloom forms. The flower appears for a very brief period of time and if it is pollinated it produces a seed pod. It will take many years before blooming plants will grow from those seeds.

A few people are fortunate enough to live or visit in rural areas where they can see these beautiful members of the lily family. The fleeting blooms open on sunny days and then are gone for another year.

Even these observers may be unaware of the hidden growth and wonderful activity that goes on beneath the soil. How many people are fortunate enough to see the blooms and also know of the unseen lives of these beautiful plants?

Perhaps the same can be said about our observations of the people around us. Do we form hasty opinions based on casual contacts? Do we rush to judgment without looking beneath the surface at all the facts? Do we really take the time to listen to and learn about the strengths and needs of those around us? Are we ready to see each of them as God's dear children?

And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you. Ephesians 4: 32 (NRSV)

Dear Heavenly Father,

As we learn about the Trout Lily and observe it in the field, we become aware of the amount of growth and activity that goes on under the soil and is unseen by most of us. That is also true as we observe the lives and growth of our friends, neighbors, and even our closest family members. Help us to become more sensitive to the unseen strengths and deepest needs of those around us. Help us to respect often overlooked qualities in them and respond to them with new understanding. In Jesus' name, Amen

Things to Do and Observe

- Find a patch of Fawn Lily leaves. When do they first appear in spring in your area?
- How long after the leaves come up do the flowers appear? Keep a journal with your observations. Also write your thoughts and feelings about the wonders of God's creation.
- Look for plants with just one leaf and others with two leaves. How many leaves do the plants with flowers have?
- If you were to color or paint a picture of the leaves, what colors would you need?
- Draw a picture of the different parts of the flower. Use a book to help you name and label the parts. Where do you find the pollen on the flower?
- What photographs could you take to show the life cycle of this plant?
- What photographs could you take to show that the plant is a spring ephemeral?
- Are the flowers open or closed on cloudy days or at night?
- Does the flower have a fragrance?
- What insects come to visit this flower? What do they give to and get from the plant?
- This plant is a "cousin" of the tulip. Compare the parts of the two plants. How are they alike? Why did scientists put both plants into the lily family?
- The plants seem to disappear during the summer. Write what you think is happening underground that will make it possible for them to come up again in spring.
- Read or have someone read the information section to help you learn more.
- Look at the photos and the captions. Can you find the same things in a patch of real flowers?
- Try writing poetry about the Trout Lily. Look at the example given.

Yellow Adder's Tongue

A dainty, golden bell
Midst leaves of brown and green
Opens when the sun is bright
And sends a golden beam.

No one has heard you ring,
Or make a tinkling sound.
But you make joy ring in the heart
When yellow blooms abound

Loretta Kuse