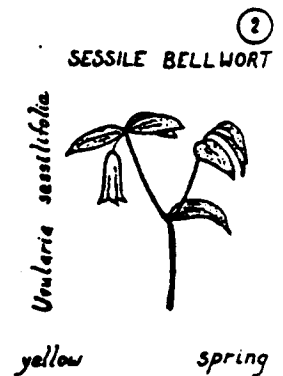


# A WILDFLOWER WALK AT WHIPPLE HILL

By:  
Doug Whitney

Illustrated by:  
John Andrews

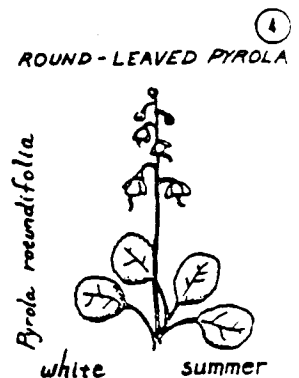
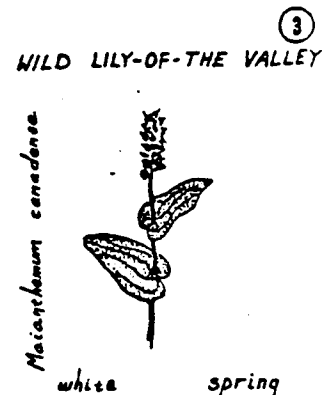
This self-guided tour provides an introduction to the wildflowers of the Whipple Hill Conservation Area in Lexington. It may be used any time between April and October to discover some of the more than ninety species of wildflowers which have been recorded at Whipple Hill. The tour begins at the Winchester Drive entrance to the conservation land and requires about one hour walking time. Most species mentioned in the guide are illustrated by a figure which is labeled with the color and scientific name. The season at which the flower usually blooms is indicated as either spring (April to mid-June), summer (mid-June thru August) or fall (September thru October). Station locations are indicated on the map and are referenced by number in the text, e.g. [4] indicates station number 4 on the map. Some of the trails in the area are steep and rocky, so sturdy footwear is advisable.



## BELOW WHIPPLE HILL

Enter the Conservation Area just to the left of the Whipple Hill sign and linger a moment in the dell at the trail crossing. In the early Spring delicate white Wood Anemone (Fig. 1) peep out of the low shrubs on the left, and Sessile Bellwort (Fig. 2), with their cream colored "bells" abound to the right. Ubiquitous Wild Lily-of-the-Valley (Fig. 3) with their white "sparkler" flowers border the trails. In the late Spring this is a good spot to discover Black Chokeberry, Early Low-bush Blueberry, Bush Honeysuckle (Fig. 33), and Round-leaved Pyrola (Fig. 4).

Follow the trail to the left as it descends a slight grade behind the colonial-style house [1-2]; turn right at the large boulder [2] behind the house and proceed some 35 paces to the crest of the trail. Just beyond the crest on the right between two large low-lying stones lies a sizeable patch of Common Haircap Moss (Fig. 5). Note its dark green starry tufts. In summer the spore-bearing capsules may be apparent atop their filamentary stalks. Remove one of these "haircaps" (a small "wig" whose scientific name is calyptra), and the lid beneath it and you can examine the "sporophyte" (spore chamber) with a magnifying lens.



Wildflowers which are transplanted seldom survive, and the picking of flowers can result in their eventual disappearance from an area. The flowers on our conservation land must be left to grow and to be enjoyed by all citizens. For this reason, Town regulations prohibit the removal of plants from Lexington Conservation land.

As the trail proceeds through a thicket of Maple-leaved Viburnum (Fig. 6), a shrub whose straighter stems were valued for arrow shafts by the Indians, it falls off to the left to meet another trail coming in on the right from the top of Whipple Hill [3]. Turn left toward the large white stucco house, but before reaching it veer off to the right past the Whorled Loosetrife (Fig. 7) toward a very large coppiced oak tree near a stone wall [4]. A coppiced tree is multi-trunked (two trunks here), usually the result of a fire which destroyed the original single trunk, but not the root structure. The very large size of this oak compared to a number of smaller coppiced oaks nearby suggests that this area was burned over at least twice.

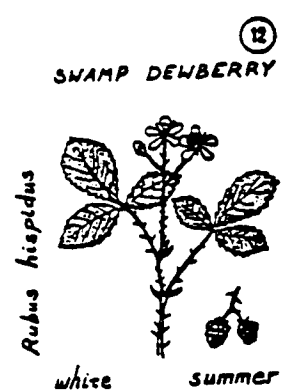
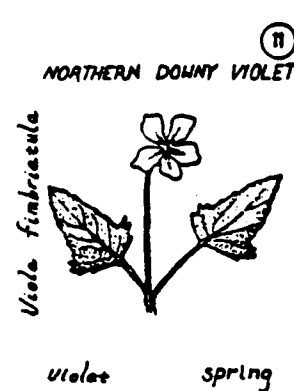
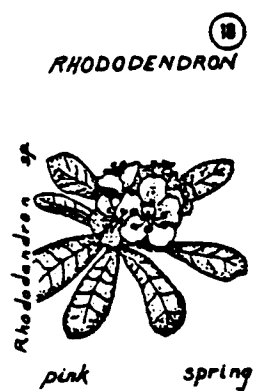
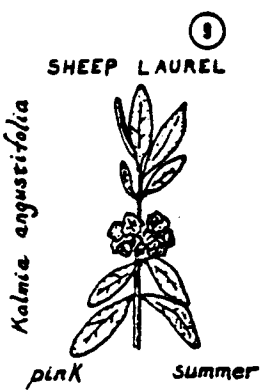
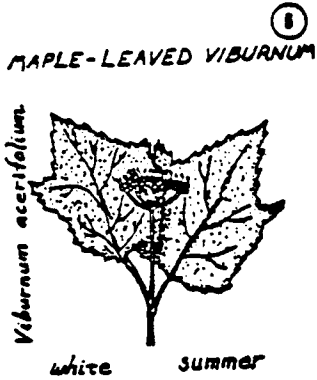
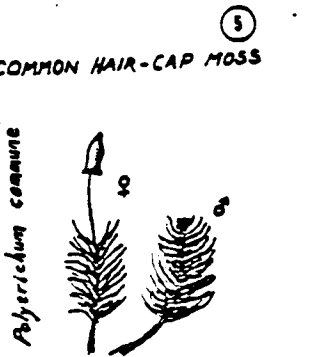
THE RAVINE

Cross the corner of the wall so as to enter the ravine. Follow the glacial debris-lined ravine as it broadens to encompass a small pond on the left [5]; (this pond is dry most of the summer months).

The stone wall roughly paralleling our path might be called the "backbone of the Whipple Hill Conservation Area" for, with a few short breaks, it runs nearly all the way from the stucco house to Summer Street.

From a point even with the near end of the pondsite observe the young Sassafras (Fig. 8) trees with their mitten-shaped leaves, the young Shag-bark Hickories, the small stand of Sheep Laurel (Lambkill) (Fig. 9) ahead (near trail), and the Ginseng and Rhododendron (Fig. 10) to the left. The roots of the Sassafras are rich in an aromatic oil used to make tea and as a flavoring for root beer. Northern Downy Violets (Fig. 11) and Swamp Dewberry (Fig. 12) grow close to the trail a few feet ahead near the Red Maple.

An interesting comparison may be made between the Red Maple tree on the left of the trail (just mentioned) and the larger one some 50 feet ahead (right side of trail). They are both Red Maples as evidenced by the shallow V-shaped notch in their leaves ("V" for Vermillion; a shade of red!). But the first one is the 3-lobed variant (Acer rubrum



trilobum) while the far one (with the "doorbell button") is the regular 5-lobed variety. (See Fig. 13).

About two-thirds of the way along the pond [6] note the trail coming in through a break in the wall on the right. When we return we will take this trail to the top of Whipple Hill.

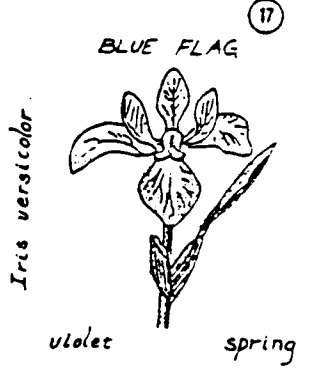
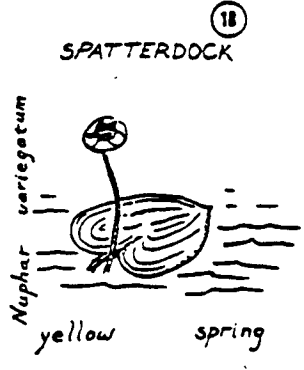
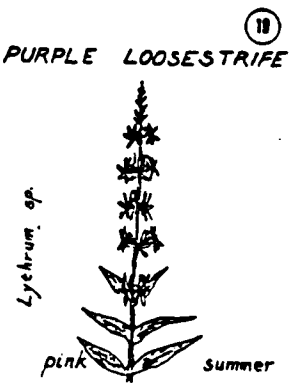
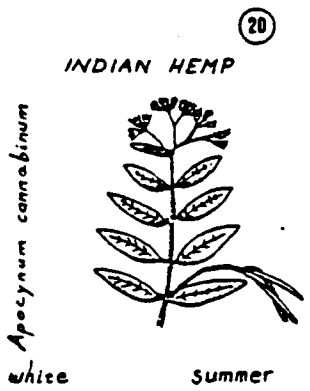
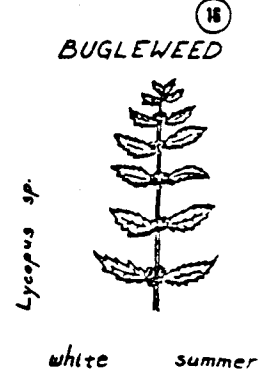
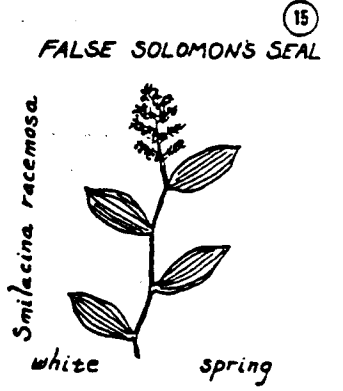
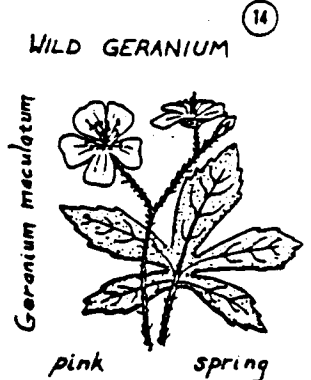
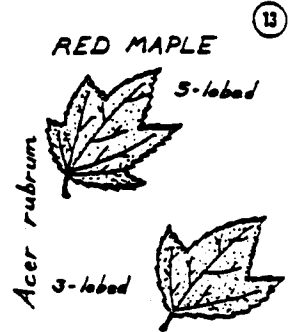
Note: Those wishing to abbreviate the walk may skip Locke Pond and procede directly to the summit of Whipple Hill by jumping ahead to the paragraph marked with an (X).

Follow the trail from the latter large Red Maple, past a large coppiced Shag-bark Hickory [7], and on to the point [8] where the trail descends to Locke Pond. During much of the flowering season this section [6-8] is lined by a large variety of woodland wildflowers, notably Wild Geranium (Fig. 14), Black Snakeroot, Red Baneberry, False Solomon's Seal (Solomon's Plume)(Fig. 15), Panacled Hawkweed, and White Wood Aster (in the Fall).

LOCKE POND

At the foot of the slope [9] turn left to proceed clockwise around the Pond. The stream "delta" at the foot of the slope hosts Bugleweed (Fig. 16) (note its square cross-sectioned stem - typical of all flowers in the mint family), and Blue Flag (Fig. 17).

At the far (east) end of the Pond [10] jump the pond outlet. The wetlands to your left along the stream form the 10 acre Locke Farm Conservation Area in the Town of Winchester. Pass by the foot of the steep trail coming down the hill. The yellow pond lily just offshore is the rather common type known as Spatterdock (Fig. 18). The Purple Loosestrife (Fig. 19) growing here is one of the three types of "purple loosestrife" growing in eastern Massachusetts (it takes a botanist to tell them apart). This is probably the one whose scientific name is Lythrum salicaria, a relatively recent import from Europe which is being watched with some alarm as it moves to take over wet meadow areas previously occupied by many other desirable plant types which enjoy the same habitat.



GOLDENROD (21)



fall

From this corner of the Pond follow the nearly straight section of the trail [10-11], past the large stand of Indian Hemp (Fig. 20) on the right until it emerges into a small meadow [21]. The crimson fruit-plumes of the Staghorn Sumac growing near the meadow are a source of food for birds which winter-over. This meadow is a good spot in the late Summer to observe the Gray and Rough-stemmed Goldenrods which are in bloom there simultaneously. The Gray may be identified by the blunt end on its basal leaves and the gray caste to its foliage (its lower stem is often a darker red brown). A clue to the Rough-stemmed, other than the obviously rough stem, is its sharply toothed leaves (Fig. 11).

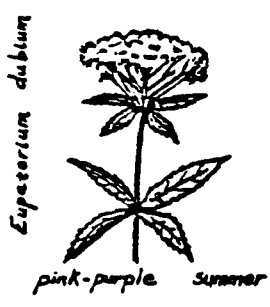
SKUNK CABBAGE (22)



brown spring

At this point [11] the trail divides three ways - take the rightmost branch through the grass, to cross the stream and return to the edge of the Pond. The marshy stream "delta" at the Pond's edge [12] is replete with many Skunk Cabbages (Fig. 22) in very early Spring. In the late summer look for Joe-Pye Weed (Fig. 23), Boneset (Fig. 24), Arrow-leaved Tearthumb, Swamp Milkweed, and Swamp Loosestrife.

JOE-PYE WEED (23)



pink-purple summer

Take time to examine the Sweet Pepperbush, the Sheep Laurel (Fig. 9), and the patch of Sphagnum Moss (Fig. 25) as you walk along the SW side [12-13] of the Pond. Although the moss in this patch [13] is somewhat the worse for wear, it is a sample of a remarkable plant. It can absorb up to 25 times its own weight of water and is antiseptic - so much so that it was used in very large quantities as a replacement for cotton in the absorbent bandages of WW-I. It is still used as a mildew-resistant potting agent for small plants.

BONESET (24)



white summer

At the westerly corner of the Pond [14] the trail follows close to the water's edge along a raised section with masses of Jewelweed (Fig. 26) to the left, and Swamp Milkweed, Arrow-leaved Tearthumb, and Bur-reed (Fig. 27) along the waters edge. The stream which forms at this point (by seeping under the raised path) flows through the Whipple Hill area all the way to Summer Street.

SPHAGNUM MOSS (25)



JEWELWEED (26)



yellow-orange summer

BUR-REED (27)



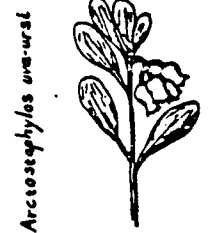
green summer

FIELD PUSSYTOES (28)



white spring

BEARBERRY (29)



white spring

TO THE SUMMIT OF WHIPPLE HILL

When it is no longer possible to follow the edge of the Pond [15] cut back a few feet away from the water and turn right. As the trail rounds the bend, note the False Nettle or Bog Hemp with its green "flowers". In the Spring Blue Flag (Fig. 17) can be found here. After a short distance the trail completes its loop of the Pond [9]. At this point turn left up the hill and return to the small pondsite.

(X) Turn away from the pond and take the trail which runs through the break in the wall [6] and up the rather steep slope to the left of the large stone outcropping. This slope is the home of Early Meadow Rue in early Spring, and a number of Round-leaved Pyrola later on. Prior to scaling the wall of the outcropping [16], look for stands of Upland Boneset (quite rare) and Field Pussytoes (Fig. 28). Atop the bluff the trail passes through a gap in a stone wall and rises to a large level plateau [17]. At the edge of the plateau is a sizeable patch of Bearberry (Fig. 29). This low-lying plant has bell-shaped flowers similar to those of the blueberry. It is not found in many locations in Lexington. Follow the trail in a generally straight line toward the Hill until it begins to rise. At this point the trail begins to zig-zag upwards [18A] passing small stands of Field Pussytoes. Eventually the trail comes out on a rocky area [19] just below the summit. This area hosts more Bearberry and a few Rattlesnake Weed.

As the trail crests Whipple Hill [20] one is facing roughly northwest, with the Burlington Mall buildings on the right, and the two Lexington water tanks to the left. Several interesting small plants grow right on top of the Hill that seem to grow nowhere else in the Conservation Area. These are Blue Curls (Fig. 30), Orangegrass (or Pineweed) (Fig. 31), and Dwarf Dandelion.

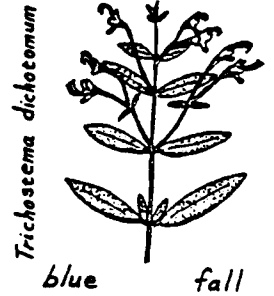
Cross the summit [20-21] and follow the well worn path leading in the direction of the red and white towers in the distance. From here the trail goes directly down the hill to the point at which the walk originated. If you happen to be returning in the month of May, it hardly need be said, "Look for the Pink Lady's Slippers." (Fig. 32) for they grow on either side of the trail (about half way down) in obvious profusion [22-23].

This guide was prepared by Citizens for Lexington Conservation, Inc., a non-profit organization concerned with the preservation of environmental quality in the Town of Lexington. For further information write

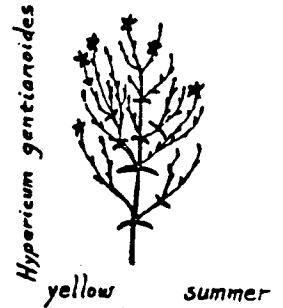
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**PO Box 292, Lexington, MA 02420**

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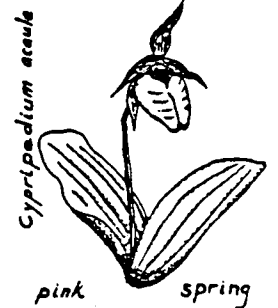
30  
BLUECURLS



31  
ORANGE GRASS

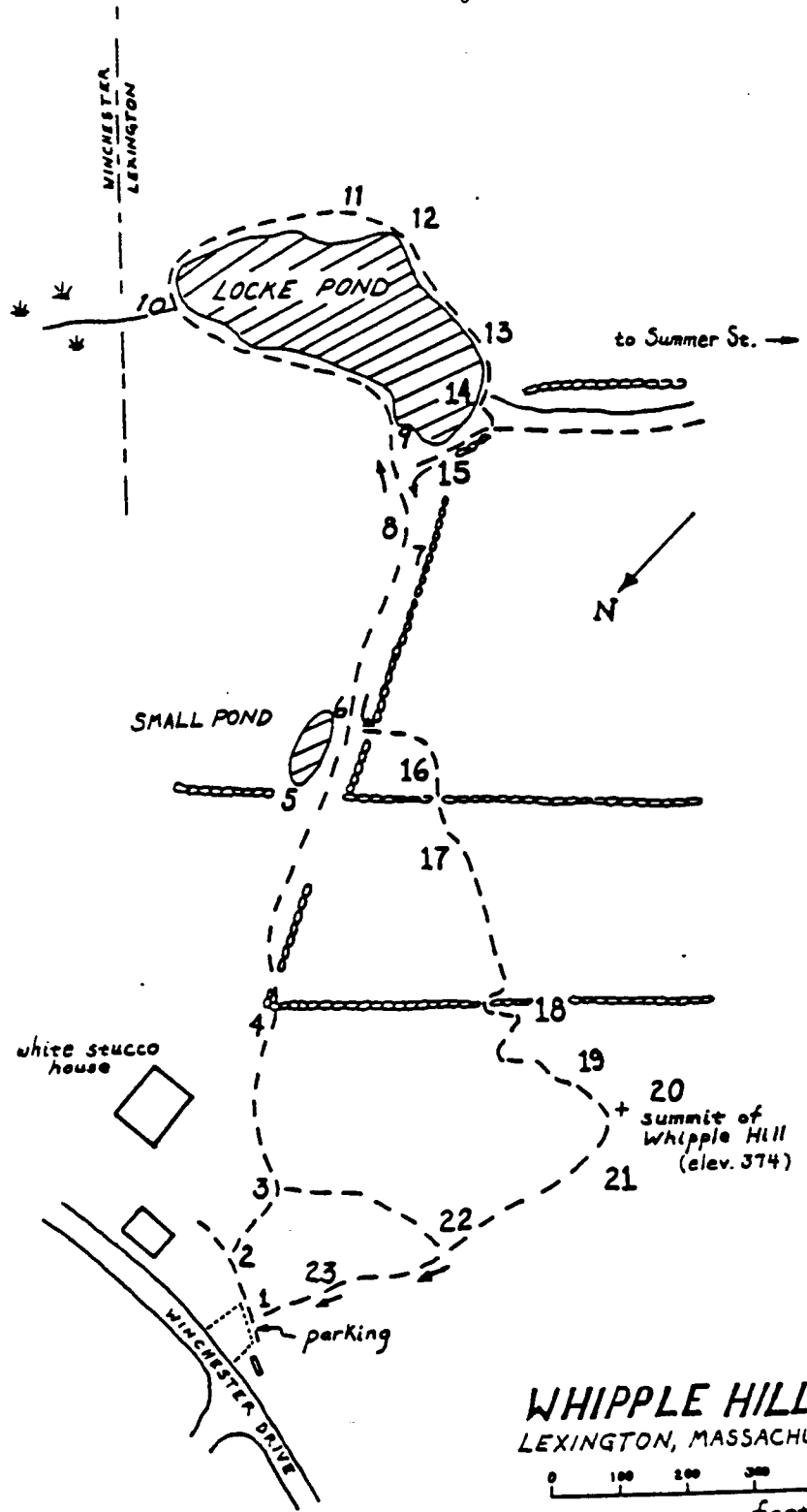


32  
PINK LADY'S-SLIPPER



33  
BUSH HONEYSUCKLE





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**WHIPPLE HILL**  
 LEXINGTON, MASSACHUSETTS

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