

# Marsh-Marigold



Conserve Native Plants Society Inc.

Common to the boreal forests of the prairies, the Marsh-marigold is a vibrant and cheery sign of spring.

Its name is comes from the Greek *Calathos* (goblet) and from the Latin *palus* (marsh), referring to its favoured habitat.

The plant stands generally 8 to 12 inches high, with its hollow stems bearing branches of dark yellow flowers. Stems sometimes sprout purplish root fibres, near the base's fleshy root mass.

It is a member of the buttercup family, and the blooms appear much like that of a larger buttercup. There are no petals but, instead, five to six petaloid sepals which are positioned upon the stem in two layers (2 - 5 cms across). Delicate stamens and several pistils cluster at the centre of the flower. The tightly-knit fruit pods contain many tiny seeds. Flowers bloom from May to June.

The shiny leaves are dark-green, dense and kidney-shaped. They can be up to 3 inches in diameter and grow from the plant's base. The leaves can be boiled and eaten as greens, but note that Marsh-marigolds are acrid in substance, can act as an irritant, and are not recommended for consumption uncooked. The plant also serves no purpose medicinally, although it was once regarded for such.

Marsh-marigolds are abundant throughout the northern hemisphere. They were favoured by the Medieval English for May Day festivals where they were used to grace the thresholds of homes, as well as for use in garlands.

Look for them in marshes, fens and in wet roadside ditches.



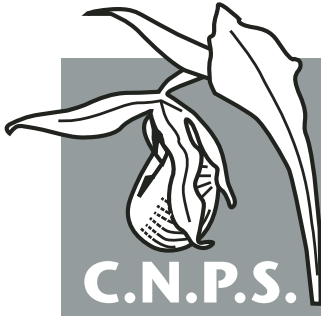
Marsh-marigold  
*Caltha palustris*  
Photo by Linda Anderson

**(C.N.P.S.) Conserve Native  
Plants Society Inc.**

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## Peat Soils

Soils with more than 30% organic matter are called organic soils. In the soil classification system, they are referred to as “Histosols.” Peat soils have organic matter of 80%.

The best conditions for the accumulation of organic deposits are marshes, bogs, and swamps. In these areas, appropriate nutrient runoff from higher elevated area will encourage initially the growth of aquatic plants such as water lilies, pondweed, reeds, cattails, sedges, grasses, and mosses. Finally, shrubs, coniferous and deciduous trees will follow. As the plants die and fall into the water, their remains enter an anaerobic environment. Under these conditions the decay process is mainly by fungi, anaerobic bacteria, algae, and microscopic aquatic animals. The final result is the breakdown of plant tissue and the formation of humus.

Peat is formed whenever conditions are favourable for its formation.

Russia has an estimated 60% of the world’s organic deposits. In Canada, there are 300 million acres of organic deposits.

Peat is classified under the following three names:

### 1) **Sedimentary Peat**

This peat was created from plants such as water lilies, plankton, pondweeds, etc. Peat from these plants is not very desirable as a soil because its physical condition changes too much when it gets wet or dries. This makes it unsuitable for growing plants.

### 2) **Fibrous Peat**

This was created from plants such as mosses, reeds, and grasses. This peat is suitable for greenhouses, nurseries, and as organic matter for flower beds and gardens.

### 3) **Woody Peat**

This peat was created from coniferous and deciduous trees. It is a brown colour when dry and almost black when wet. It holds less water than fibrous peat, but produces a very good field soil. It is very desirable for growing crops like vegetables, etc.

