

# Asarum canadense

## (Common or Canadian) Wild Ginger

Tried and True  
Native Plant Selections  
for the Mid-Atlantic  
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Native to rich, deciduous forests in the eastern half of North America,\* Wild Ginger naturalizes to create a lush ground cover with velvety, heart-shaped leaves. Historically used as a flavor substitute for culinary ginger, consumption today is ill-advised. The Virginia Native Plant Society selected Wild Ginger as Wildflower of the Year for 2010.



Ground Cover	Colony, Flowers
Height: ½–1 foot	
Spread: 1–1½ feet	
Bloom Color: Brown-purple	
Characteristics	
<u>Deciduous perennial</u> ground cover	
<u>Alternate</u> , heart-shaped, <u>velvety</u> , green basal leaves with smooth margins and <u>pubescent petioles</u>	
Tiny, ground-hugging, 1-inch, bell-shaped, solitary flowers with 3-lobed, recurved <u>calyx</u> emerge on hairy stalks from <u>axils</u> of paired leaves April–May followed by a seed <u>capsule</u>	
Spreads slowly by <u>rhizomes</u> to form colonies	
Attributes	
Tolerates wet <u>soil</u> and dense shade; drought-intolerant; no serious pests (though snails/slugs may feed on leaves in early spring) or diseases	
<u>Deer</u> rarely damage (may browse on occasion)	
<u>Ethnobotanic</u> uses; therapeutic uses (sedative, fever reducer); discouraged as substitute for culinary ginger as it may have toxic compounds	
Attracts flies, beetles; <u>larval</u> host to ~1 <u>lepidopteran</u>	
Growing and Maintenance Tips	Excellent Replacement for
<u>Soil Requirements</u> : Acidic (prefers), well-drained	<u>Arum italicum</u> - Italian Arum
<u>Light Requirements</u> : Partial Shade, Shade	<u>Liriope spicata</u> - Creeping Liriope
<u>Water Requirements</u> : Moist	<u>Vinca Minor</u> - Periwinkle
Divide mature plants early fall	*It is <u>native</u> to DC and common in the DE Piedmont, but rare in its Coastal Plain. It is found primarily in the MD Piedmont and mountains and is present throughout PA except in some central counties. In VA, it is common in the mountains and Piedmont, infrequent in the inner Coastal Plain, and rare in the outer Coastal Plain. In NoVa, the Digital Atlas of the VA Flora does not report it in Arlington County, but the USDA Plants database does.
Use as edging, in rain, shade or woodland gardens, or massed on slopes to control erosion	
<u>Hardiness</u> : USDA Zones 4a–6b	
<i>developed by Master Gardeners of Northern Virginia, serving Arlington and Alexandria</i>	

Images by Mary Free, Quarry Shade Garden