



Spring BLOSSOMS

Decorate Michigan
Woods, Parks,
Nature Centers
& Gardens

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY
MICHIGAN NATURE ASSOCIATION

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BY DIANNA STAMPFLER

April showers bring May flowers...and in Michigan, that includes tulips, apple and cherry blossoms, dogwood, trillium and other spring wildflowers, among others.

Rich in Native American heritage and lore, there are actually more than 40 varieties of trillium, which blanket the forest floors for a brief few weeks each spring. Among the most common in Michigan is the *Trillium grandiflorum* or the “large flowered trillium.” Standing tall on green stem, the often white, three-petaled flower draws nutrients from three broad bracts that look like leaves. Although abundant in some areas, trilliums are actually very delicate flowers and in many areas throughout North America—including Michigan—it is illegal to pick them. Viewing trilliums, however, is perfectly acceptable and encouraged!

MICHIGAN NATURE CENTERS, ARBORETUMS & GARDENS

Spring is the perfect time to enjoy Michigan outdoors. So, set a course for exploring the many wonderful parks and nature centers that abound in this resource-rich state. Spend a day, feel the warm sun soothe your soul and enjoy the gifts nature has to offer. This list will get you started—keep it handy as a resource for any time of the year.

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| Blandford Nature Center, Grand Rapids | Lewis E. Wint Nature Center, Pontiac |
| Blue Water Land Conservancy, Port Huron | Livingston Land Conservancy, Brighton |
| Botanical Garden Society of Northwest Michigan, Traverse City | Lloyd A. Stage Nature Center, Troy |
| Brockway Mountain Wildlife Sanctuary, Eagle Harbor | Love Creek County Park & Nature Center, Berrien Center |
| Calvin College Ecosystem Preserve, Grand Rapids | Lyon Oaks Nature Center, Wixom |
| Chippewa Nature Center, Midland | Macomb Land Conservancy, Romeo |
| Chippewa Watershed Conservancy, Mount Pleasant | Mary MacDonald Preserve, Copper Harbor |
| Dahlem Environmental Education Center, Jackson | Matthaei Botanical Gardens & Nichols Arboretum, Ann Arbor |
| DeGraaf Nature Center, Holland | Michigan Karst Conservancy, Ann Arbor |
| Dinosaur Hill Nature Preserve, Rochester | Moosewoods Nature Center, Marquette |
| Drayton Plains Nature Center, Waterford | North Oakland Headwaters Land Conservancy, Clarkston |
| Eddy Discovery Center, Chelsea | Oakland Land Conservancy, Rochester |
| Environmental Interpretive Center, Dearborn | Oakwoods Nature Center, Belleville |
| Fenner Nature Center, Lansing | Outdoor Discovery Center of Wildlife, Holland |
| Fernwood Botanical Garden & Nature Preserve, Niles | Pierce Cedar Creek Institute, Hastings |
| For-Mar Nature Preserve & Arboretum, Burton | Pine River Nature Center, Goodells |
| Frederik Meijer Gardens, Grand Rapids | Rails to Trails Conservancy – Michigan Chapter, Lansing |
| Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy, Traverse City | Raisin Valley Land Trust, Manchester |
| Grass River Nature Area, Bellaire | Ringwood Forest, Saginaw |
| Great Lakes Bioregional Land Conservancy, Lapeer | Rouge River Bird Observatory, Dearborn |
| Grosse Ile Nature & Land Conservancy, Grosse Ile | Sarett Nature Center, Benton Harbor |
| Harris Nature Center, Okemos | SEE North Environmental Education Center, Petoskey |
| Hartley Outdoor Education Center, St. Charles | Seven Pounds Nature Center, Dryden |
| Hawk Woods Nature Center, Auburn Hills | Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy, Ann Arbor |
| Helmut & Candis Stern Preserve, Eagle Harbor | Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy, Portage |
| Howard Christensen Nature Center, Kent City | Stony Creek Metropark, Utica |
| Howell Nature Center, Howell | Stubnitz Environmental Education Center, Adrian |
| Huron County Nature Center, Port Austin | Thorn Swift Nature Preserve, Harbor Springs |
| Kalamazoo Nature Center, Kalamazoo | Thurston Nature Center, Ann Arbor |
| Kensington Nature Center, Milford | Walloon Lake Trust & Conservancy, Petoskey |
| Kettuneun Center, Tustin | Washtenaw Land Trust, Ann Arbor |
| Keweenaw Land Trust, Lake Linden | West Bloomfield Land Conservancy, West Bloomfield |
| Lake Bailey Wildlife Sanctuary, Eagle Harbor | Whitefish Point Bird Observatory, Paradise |
| Lake Traverse Conservancy, Harbor Springs | Whitehouse Nature Center, Albion |
| Land Conservancy of West Michigan, Grand Rapids | Wittenbach/Wege Agri-Science & Environmental Education Center, Lowell |
| Leelanau Conservancy, Leland | Woldumar Nature Center, Lansing |
| Leslie Science Center & Cobblestone Farm, Ann Arbor | Yellow Dog Watershed Preserve, Big Bay |



Spring is the peak season for visiting the Gwen Frostic Woodland Shade Garden at Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park (www.meijergardens.org) in Grand Rapids. Wood benches along the shady trails invite you to sit, relax and soak up natural surroundings. Trillium, goldenrod, geranium and baneberry are among the flowers you will find here, alongside bronze sculptures that blend into the landscape. The Lena Meijer Children's Garden, Michigan Farm Garden and English Perennial Garden are also open for your touring pleasure. Of course, you'll find more than flowers blossoming...during the "Butterflies Are Blooming" exhibit, March 1 through April 30. Hundreds upon hundreds of fluttering butterflies will be in the 5-story, 80-degree Tropical Conservatory—more than 40 different species from around the world—in this 16th annual event.

One of America's most noted nature-inspired artists is Gwen Frostic (www.gwenfrostic.com). Even today, more than 10 years after her passing, her passion and legend lives on in the elegant hand-crafted stationary and Presscraft papers. Tucked into a wooded parcel along the Betsie River in Benzonia, her unique shop—built of native stones, glass and reclaimed wood—is one of Michigan's most treasured and best-kept secrets. From the display room, visitors can view 12 Heidelberg presses as they print books, postcards, notepads and other items, using the original blocks created by Gwen herself. Relax inside the library, which boasts one of the most complete nature collections in Michigan. Or, get out and walk along the trails that meander the property and watch the seasons change.

Recognized nationally as one of the top seasonal events, the Blossomtime Festival (www.blossomtimefestival.org) spreads out over 24 communities—including St. Joseph and Benton Harbor—from April 30 through May 7. Inspired by the growing agricultural industry in

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Southwest Michigan, it was Rev. W.J. Cady of the first Congregational Church in Benton Harbor who is said to have created the first Blossom-time festival back in 1906 by urging his parishioners to drive through the orchards and view the fruit blossoms as a “symbol of life renewed.” The first Blossomtime Parade was held in 1923 and the first Blossom-time Pageant followed in 1924. Today, these two activities are among dozens that make up this spring festival Michigan’s oldest and largest multi-community event.

Celebrate the splendor of spring in the Fernwood Railway Garden (www.fernwoodbotanical.org) in Niles. Opening May 7 for the season, this Paul Busse-designed attraction features four levels of track, with a train on each level, which wind their way along 510 feet of track, through three island gardens, under a pedestrian walk-over bridge and atop 7-foot high trestle bridges. A detailed miniature garden features dwarf evergreens, alpine plants and natural materials—such as stones, branches and moss. Scale models of local landmarks— including the Pears Mill, St. Joseph North Pier Lights, Niles Depot and others—all made out of natural materials—can be found here as well. Mother’s Day weekend is an especially popular time to visit the gardens and walk the trails, in search of trillium and other spring flora and fauna.

One of the most noted festivals in the country is the annual Tulip Time Festival (www.tuliptime.com), which graces the community of Holland May 7-14. First held more than 80 years ago, this festival honors the Dutch heritage and culture with multi-generational events including three amazing parades, Dutch dance performances, concerts, theatre, trolley tours and so much more. Did you know that more than



4 million tulips blossom in Holland each year? The tradition which launched the festival traces back to the late 1920s when Miss Lida Rogers, a high school biology teacher, suggested commemorating Holland’s Dutch heritage, history and culture by planting 100,000 tulips around the city. With the arrival of the flowers in the spring came an overwhelming number of visitors seeking to view their beauty...and as such, Tulip Time Festival was born. Today, it is recognized as one of the “Top 20” events in the world by the International Festivals & Events Association.

The Chippewa Nature Center (www.chippewanaturecenter.com) in Midland invites you out to learn about trillium and other wildflowers, in their natural beauty. May 10 is the Woodland Wildflowers program, and then on various dates in June it’s “Those ‘Wild’ Flowers” which includes self-guided, hands-on exploration stations as well as crafts, scavenger hunts and experiments.

The Gillette Visitor Center (www.gillettnature.org) at the PJ Hoffmaster State Park in Muskegon hosts its annual Spring Blooms in the Dunes on May 7. The event includes a few guided wildflower walks, children’s activities from 10 a.m. to noon, special exhibits and the annual spring ephemeral plant sale.

Plan a visit May 14-15 to the Woldumar Nature Center (www.woldumar.org) in Lansing for their annual “Wildflower Weekend.” Visitors will find that spring is in the air—whether it’s the nature-inspired art, entertainment, garden and nature seminars or the wildflower walk.

Hundreds of hiking trails operated by city, county and state units afford the opportunity for wildflower viewing throughout the spring season. Of special note is the “Trillium Trail”—found on 20 acres in St. Clair County in southeast Michigan (www.michigannature.org). Located in a small stream valley north of Memphis, Michigan, this sanctuary provides excellent viewing for bird watching as well. Visitors can traverse the steep slopes as a glorious display of wildflowers spread out in all directions, under the canopy of the forest growth.

Over in Berrien County—in Southwest Michigan—be sure to seek out the trillium-laden trails that meander through the Love Creek Park (www.berriencounty.org). In the late 1800s, the county acquired this acreage and set up a farmstead refuge where individuals down on their luck could find work, a meal and a temporary home. Today, the farm no longer stands but visitors will find small pockets of rare, century-old timbers and some of the most spectacular hiking trails in the region—an ideal setting for a spring trek.

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When it comes to spring, Michigan wineries are at the front of the line to celebrate—glass in hand, of course. Make plans now to attend the “Spring Sip & Savor,” April 30-May 1 with the Leelanau Peninsula wineries (www.lpwineries.com). The weekend includes brunch-themed wine and food pairings at each of the 18 wineries on the trail. A fancy hat and pajama contest are part of the festivities. Over on Old Mission Peninsula (www.wineriesofoldmission.com), it’s the annual “Blessing of the Blossoms,” May 14-15. Wine-makers invite you into their tasting rooms to sample barrel and reserve wines, in addition to the new year’s unreleased wines.

If you’re looking for ideas on crafting your own home garden, then ShowSpan (www.showspan.com) has three events of particular interest to you, including the West Michigan Home & Garden Show, March 3-6 at DeVos Place in Grand Rapids; the Michigan Home & Garden Show, March 11-12 at the Pontiac Silverdome; and the Lansing Home & Garden Show, March 17-20 at the MSU Pavilion in East Lansing.

For more spring festivals and nature-inspired attractions and events, visit Michigan.org.

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