

UNDER the GREENWOOD TREE

The woods are full of white flowered members of the Lily family during May. Not true lilies of the genus *Lilium*, these more diminutive Liliaceae belong to several other general within the greater Lily family.

The most spectacular of these is the False Solomon's Seal, which is often a three to four foot plant with its large leaves almost paired on the single stem from base to flower. The flower itself is a creamy white panicle composed of many tiny flowers. After the flowering berries develop which assume red spots on them as they ripen, the berry is edible, but its flavor is such you do not develop a taste for them.

Much daintier is the Star flowered Solomon's Seal, which rarely grows more than a foot tall. The leaves of this smaller plant are evenly alternated as they are arranged on the single stem. The flower head is a loose raceme consisting of at most a dozen florets. These are, however, larger than the florets of the False Solomon's Seal and are flat six pointed stars when fully open. This too, yields a berry in the fall. The False Solomon's Seal, *Vagnera Amplexicaulis*, may be found singly or in small groups in either partial or dense shade. The Star-flowered Solomon's Seal, *Vagnera Sessilifolia*, may be found in large colonies, never singly, in either full sun or dappled shade.

The so-called Wild Lily of the Valley, *Unifolium Bifolium* Kamschatcicum, is a low growing relative of the above. It is distinguished by two large basal leaves of a heart shape and apparently stemless in its youth. When it reaches blooming age, it may have as many as four leaves arranged alternately on its short stem. The bloom is a tightly packed pucernoe of tiny florets, always white. These are followed by a red berry or two. These berries are also edible and are consumed by various of the small woods animals. This plant prefers shade, but large colonies of it often extend their boundaries into full sun areas. It does like moisture, and plants of this species which get established on dry areas may live for years without ever blooming. Those plants that do find themselves in a full sun situation will have pale yellowish foliage but will be as

Unifolium Bifolium
Kamschatcicum
(Wild Lily-of-the valley)



Smith's Fairy Bells
(Disporum Smithii)

All the above are single stemmed, unbranched plants. We also have members of the Liliaceae that have branched stems that are blooming through May. The most prominent of these are the two Fairy Bells. The leaf form of these is in between the broad lance head shape of the Solomon Seals and the broader heart shaped leaf of the Wild Lily of the Valley. These leaves alternate on the stems. The Oregon Fairy Bells, *Disporum Oreganum*, has flowers on short stems originating from the leaf axils, usually in groups of three. These are definitely Bell shaped with recurving tips on the six petals which make up the bell. The flowers are shy, hiding under the leaves, so it may be necessary to lift up the leaves to get a good view of them.

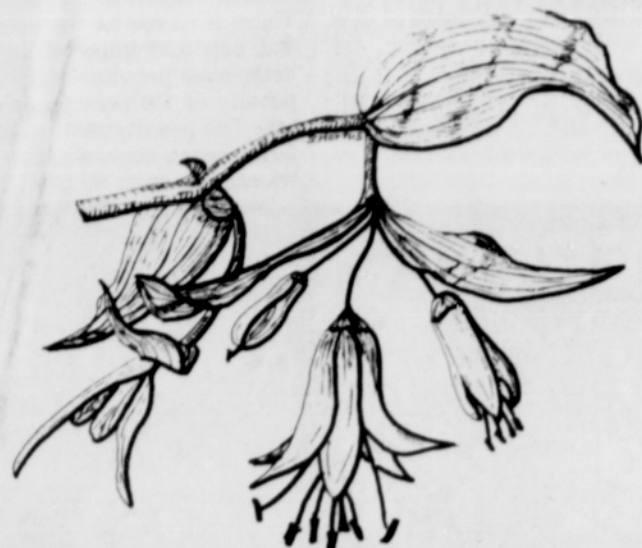
Smith's Fairy Bells, *Disporum Smithii*, has a similar method of carrying the flowers beneath the leaves. The

flower shape is quite distinctive. Not bell like at all, the long tubular flower is wider at the base than at the petal tips. Otherwise the two species are much alike. They grow to three feet tall and are much branched. Both are rarely found singly. The usual find is three to a dozen plants growing crowded together. The two species are sometimes found together in a single group. Both have a fairly large golden berry as a fruit, which has led to them being referred to as "Gold Drops" by some.

Another relative that resembles the Fairy Bells closely is the Twisted Stalk, *Streptopus Amplexifolius*. This plant is sometimes confused with the Oregon Fairy Bells. Look closely and two differences will be apparent. The

flowers are born singly from each leaf axil, and two, each flower is hanging on a wiry

twisted stem. This latter characteristic gives the plant its common name. In fruit, the



Oregon Fairy Bells (Disporum Oreganum)

difference is more striking as the Twisted Stalk bears bright red oval shaped berries in the fall.

There is another Twisted Stalk which has no branches and is thusly named the Simplestemmed Twisted Stalk, *Streptopus Curvipes*. If you find this one, you cannot confuse it with any of the foregoing. It has rose-pink flowers on the characteristic twisted stems on an unbranched stalk. The foliage of the Twisted Stalks is identical with the foliage of the Fairy Bells.

The Lily family characteristics are noticeable on all these wild plants. The flower parts are in threes or sixes. There are three petals and three sepals in the corolla. There are six anthers, and the pistil is three lobed.

There are other members of

the great Lily family which have already bloomed, notably the Trilliums. There are also other members that are yet to bloom, such as the Clintonia and Squaw Grass to mention a few. Some of these will be sketched and presented later in the season.



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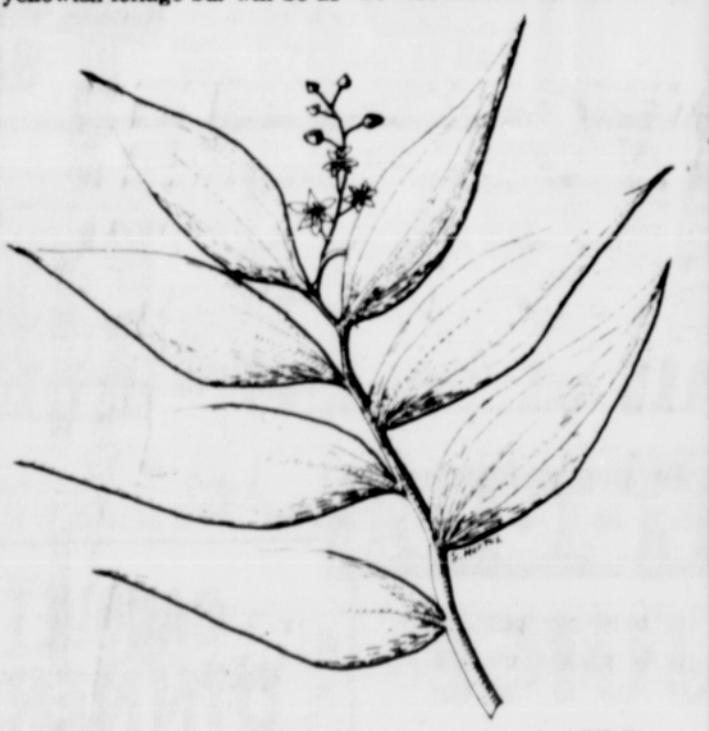
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Star-flowered Solomon's Seal (Vagnera Sessilifolia)



False Solomon's Seal (Vagnera Amplexicaulis)

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