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**Wildflower Spot – June 2017**  
John Clayton Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

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## SUNDROPS

*Oenothera fruticosa*

By Helen Hamilton, *Past-president of the John Clayton Chapter, VNPS*

This bright little early summer plant blooms in the morning and closes in the evening; evening-primroses are relatives, they bloom in evening and close during the day. Sundrops have 2-inch lemon yellow flowers with 4 petals and in the center 8 prominent stamens and a large 4-lobed stigma, forming a cross. This is a biennial plant, forming only rosettes of leaves the first year. The leaves are elliptical in shape with smooth edges -- both the stems and leaves covered with fine hairs.

By the second year the flowers are in a spike-like cluster at the top of stems usually about 3 feet tall, with some branching. The flowers of Sundrops start to appear in April and will continue blooming until August; they make a nice contrast planted with orange Butterfly Weed and dark-blue Spiderwort.

The scientific name of the family is derived from *onager*, the Greek word for wild ass, beasts who threw stones with their hind legs when agitated. In ancient times, a stone-throwing catapult became known as an onager. Sundrops flowers are followed by ribbed, club-shaped pods with

many tiny seeds that are vigorously released, as with a catapult, to be spread throughout the garden.

Widespread across Virginia, Sundrops prefers moist, well-drained soil in full to part sun. The plant ranges from Nova Scotia to New York and south to Florida and Alabama. ❖



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**Photo:** Sundrops (*Oenothera fruticosa*) taken by Helen Hamilton  
For more information about native plants visit [www.vnps.org](http://www.vnps.org).