
Wildflower Spot – June 2008
John Clayton Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

THIMBLEWEED

Anemone virginiana

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This spring-blooming anemone grows up to 2' tall (sometimes taller in the wild) and typically occurs in rocky or dry open woods or wooded slopes. One-inch diameter flowers are borne on erect stems above the foliage and feature five, greenish-white, petal-like sepals and a thimble-like, center mound of yellowish stamens. Flowers give way to thimble-shaped, cottony seed heads which remain on the plants well into winter. Three-parted, deeply cut leaves may carry a reddish tinge late into the season.

Thimbleweed is an excellent spring flower for the shaded or woodland garden, and also a good choice for naturalized areas or native wildflower gardens. The plant tends to spread into unoccupied areas, effectively forming a nice groundcover through the season. It will be found in other areas of the garden next year, from dissemination of its seeds.

Growing in nearly every county in Virginia, the blooming season extends June through August. The plant prefers moist, sandy soils, and is easily grown in average, well-drained soil in full sun to part shade. No serious insect or disease problems have been reported.

Native Americans used the roots of thimbleweed medicinally. It was used against diarrhea, whooping cough, tuberculosis, and witchcraft. It was also used as a general stimulant and to prepare a love potion. Smoke from roasting seeds was used to revive the unconscious by being blown into the nostrils of the patient. How many of these uses actually worked and how many were wishful thinking is an interesting question that might be worthy of study. ❖



Photo: Thimbleweed (*Anemone virginiana*)

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