

FALSE GARLIC

Nothoscordum bivalve

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

This slender bulbous perennial has ½-inch white flowers clustered at the top of leafless stems up to 13 inches in height. Each flowering stem is tipped with a pair of membranous bracts from which arises the “umbel” of 5-12 long-stalked flowers. The 6 white tepals are often green or purplish along the midrib on the lower side. False Garlic has grass-like basal leaves only, slender and smooth on the margins.

False Garlic occurs in open woodlands, fields, along roadsides, only in the southern coastal counties of Virginia. The range is from south-east Virginia to Florida, and west to Nebraska and Texas. The plant blooms in early spring (March-May) and again in the fall (September-October).

The scientific name of the plant is derived from the Greek *nothos*, meaning “false,” and *scordon*, for “garlic.” *Bivalve* may refer to the pair of bracts below the flowers. Also known as Crow Poison, the plant is mildly toxic. It resembles Wild Onion (*Allium canadense*) but lacks the smell of onion or garlic when crushed. ❖

