

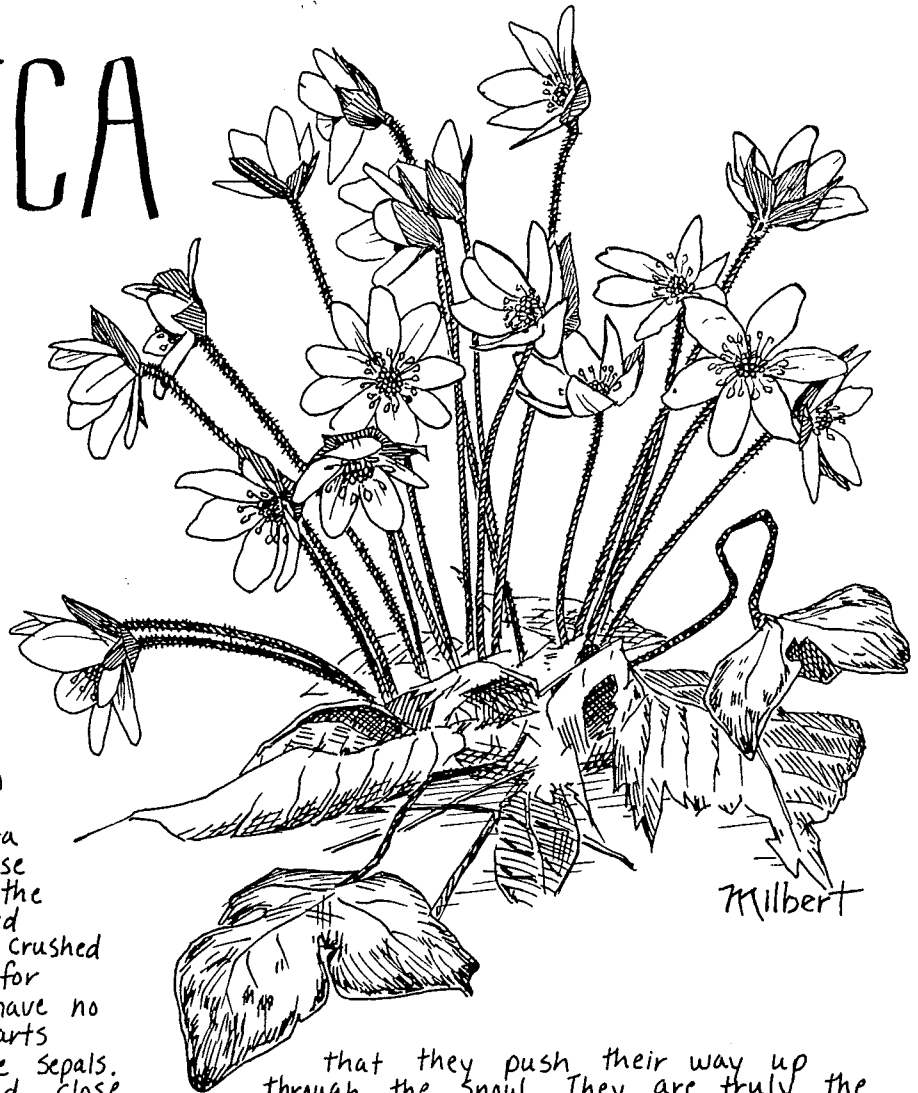
River Bend Naturalists Notebook

Presented by: RIVER BEND NATURE CENTER, Faribault, MN 55021

HEPATICIA

Two kinds of hepatica grow in Southeastern Minnesota, although seldom together, they look very much alike except for their leaf shapes. The Sharp-lobed Hepatica (*Hepatica Acutiloba*) illustrated here, flourishes in soil with a limestone base and is common at the River Bend Nature Center. The Round-lobed Hepatica (*Hepatica americana*) grows in acid soil and is common to extreme Southeastern Minnesota into western Wisconsin. Because at one time people thought the leaf of this plant was shaped like a liver, it was often crushed and taken as an antidote for liver trouble. The flowers have no petals, instead the colored parts that look like petals are the sepals. The three tiny leaves found close beneath the colored sepals are often mistaken for sepals.

The stems of the flowers and new leaves have many hair-like projections that contract and expand as thawing and freezing takes place. This protects the plant from the loss of too much moisture. Hepaticas often bloom so early in the spring



that they push their way up through the snow. They are truly the harbingers of Spring, with flowers that vary from lilac or bluish to white in color. The thick coarse leaves are 3-lobed and semi-evergreen lasting through the winter. By spring they are discolored. The new leaves emerge during or shortly after flower bloom. The earliest flower bloom date for this area is March 22nd, the latest April 23, with the 13 year Average April 12th.
— text by Orwin A. Rustad.