



Capturing Spring's Ephemeral Beauty

By Jill McWhinnie

One of the most enjoyable ways to spend a spring day in Stouffville is a photography walk in the York Regional Forest capturing images of the woodland reawakening. For many photographers, the defining image is the luminous white bloom of the trillium grandiflorum, Ontario's floral emblem.

Trilliums typically start flowering in late April to early May and are in a category of plants known as spring ephemerals, whose life-cycle is synchronized with that of the deciduous woodland where they grow. They wither back as the forest canopy grows lush and closes off sunlight.

Trilliums grow slowly, taking seven to eleven years to produce their first flowers. Their average lifespan is 20 years, and the white blossom may become pink on an older plant.

Last month I joined members of ThePassingShow camera group; Sig Kusatz, Peter Rudner, Kevin McWhinnie and Ken Jarvis; for a trillium photo shoot in the Robinson Tract of the York Regional Forest. I asked them what makes a good trillium picture and what equipment they use to capture the flowers at their best.

"On our nature hikes we look for undamaged, unblemished specimens, in the best possible light, against a blurred, contrasting colour background," said Sig.

"I never bring an unwieldy tripod, as in daylight

I feel I can hold the camera steady enough to get a sharp picture. I mostly use natural light, and occasionally supplement the light with a fill-in flash. Since this is one of our 'rites of spring', we already know which conservation areas in the York Regional Forest are most likely to produce a good crop of trilliums."

Ken Jarvis took some time to find his floral subject; a perfect specimen of the trillium grandiflorum.

"I liked this trillium because it was so full and colourful," he said.

"For this picture I set the camera on manual mode, ISO 100, shutter speed 1/200 second, aperture of f/5.6, off camera speedlight using a Pocket Wizard with a Rogue flash bender set on a 45 degree angle two feet from the flower," he explained.

"This gave the trillium proper exposure, with some-soft shadows with a somewhat darker background and good detail. I did some minor editing in Photoshop CC to remove some defects on the flower."

Peter Rudner is currently enrolled in the Certificate Program in Photography at the Chang School at Ryerson University. He took a shot of the red trillium, also known as the "wake robin" because of its colour and its appearance at the time the robins return in spring.

"I used my 50mm lens - about the same perspective as the human eye - and opened it right up to F1.4 so I could create a nice blurry background to separate the flower from any distractions," he said.

"Fortunately the sun cooperated and created a little patch of light on the flower and its leaves, but nowhere else, to create further separation."

Kevin McWhinnie said his picture of trilliums by a woodland path is "an invitation to Stouffville photographers and all residents to enjoy the many conservation areas we are so fortunate to have in Whitchurch-Stouffville. Spring, around Mother's Day weekend, is certainly one of the best times to experience this renewal of nature, and capture it photographically."



A perfect specimen of trillium grandiflorum Ken Jarvis photo



This red trillium is also known as the 'wake robin' because of its colour and its appearance at the time when robins return in spring. Peter Rudner photo



A glorious sweep of trilliums by a woodland path in York Regional Forest. Kevin McWhinnie photo

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