

Erythronium grandiflorum

Common names: Dogtooth violet, Fawnlily, Troutlily, Adder's Tongue, Glacier Lily, Avalanche Lily, Lamb's tongue

This is one of the first bulbs that we look forward to seeing in bloom in the spring; it is usually blooming on Moscow Mountain by the second or third week of April. It is commonly found under ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir in fairly open stands. Erythronium varieties are found all over the United States and in other countries. These beautiful flowers are related to the lilies. The individual plant of *E. grandiflorum* with its golden flowers is beautiful, but it is the great drifts in mountain meadows which really grab our attention. Each deep-seated bulb has one or more blooms depending on the condition of the soil and the amount of water prior to bloom. Young bulbs often only put up one or more lance-shaped leaves while they grow large enough to sustain flowers. From seed to bulb can take 3 to 5 years. Foliage is deciduous; plants are from 6 to 15" tall. The bulb is a corm about 1 to 1 1/2 " long, shaped like a dog's tooth. Flowers have 6 petals and 6 stamens.



Variations: Most of the Erythronium in this area are gold flowered. There are some sites locally however where the Erythronium have white blooms – specifically in the area around Steptoe Butte and along Highway 95 north of the casino.

Use in the landscape: Although some books recommend other varieties over grandiflorum, you can have success in flower beds with lots of organic matter and which is well drained, but with good spring moisture. The bulbs will go deeper and deeper the older they get. The plants do self-sow once established.

Availability: Other varieties seem to be more likely to be available in nurseries and in specialty catalogs. Particularly the mottled leaf varieties *E. oregonum* and *reversum*. Both seeds and bulbs are hard to find but are available. If you know someone who has them in garden beds and is willing to share the seeds, then these should be collected as soon as the seed pods are dry. If you wait longer the seed pods may be knocked down or will have holes in them from rodents raiding the pod. One should never try to harvest the bulbs in the wild as the bulbs are seated very deeply and often the plant will be damaged in the attempt.

Pests: In the garden the plants and flowers are rarely bothered by pests. The seeds however must be a good food source for mice as the longer the seed pod stands the more likely it is to be robbed of seeds. In the wild bears and deer do eat leaves, corms and seedpods.

Edibility: The bulbs are considered edible by some, but if eaten, should be tried cautiously as some people have reported an emetic reaction. Native Americans ate them raw and also cooked. The plants are so beautiful and the retrieval of the bulb so difficult that the general advice is that this is a plant which should only be tried in an emergency, and then very cautiously.

Propagation by seed. Sow in container or nursery bed in the late summer or fall in a shady place. Soil should be well-drained, rich in leaf mold. I have had success sprinkling the seeds in flower beds under shrubs and pines and covering lightly. If you are able to find bulbs, then plant the bulbs 4 to 6" deep in moist, woodland soil where they get part-day sun. New ornamental varieties are becoming available as well.

Native Plants should not be dug from the wild. Please purchase from reputable dealers.

For more information: Arthur R. Kruckeberg, [Gardening with Native Plants of the Pacific Northwest](#); H. D Harrington, [Edible Plants of the Rocky Mountains](#); Numerous sites can be found on the web by typing the plant name in a search engine such as Google.