

Canada Mayflower (*Maianthemum canadense*)

Do you have partially or deeply shaded areas on your property that are difficult to cultivate? Consider the Canada Mayflower...

A native perennial, the Canada Mayflower is an unusual member of the Liliaceae or Lily Family in that it has only 2 petals, 2 sepal, and 4 stamens instead of the usual 3-3-6 pattern. It is a low plant, only 3-6 inches tall that blankets woodlands with its short often zigzag stems and two shiny, oval leaves. The leaves, up to 3 x 2" in size, are smooth with parallel leaf venation. The plant spreads by rhizomes; a single clone can be up to 19 feet in diameter.

The Latin name, *Maianthemum*, means May blossom...an appropriate name since the plant flowers in May. The blooms consist of dense clusters of tiny, white, star-shaped flowers that are held upright on delicate stems 1 to 1 ½ inches long. During the summer, the flowers are replaced by small (1/8 inch) green-dotted berries that ripen to a deep red. These fruits persist throughout winter providing food during the spring for Ruffed Grouse, White-Footed Mouse, and Eastern Chipmunk. It is one of the most common understory plants found near great owl nest sites.

The distribution of the Canada Mayflower extends from northern British Columbia south to Montana/Wyoming and east to Atlantic Coast. It is common the Great Lakes region and can be found on Isle Royal. Habitats include sandy woodlands, north-facing wooded slopes, shaded bogs, and sandstone ledges along ravines in wooded areas.

Other common names for the Canada Mayflower are False Lily-of-the-Valley or Wild Lily-of-the-Valley.

Photos and more information available at

http://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id_plant=maca4 and

<http://plants.usda.gov/java/profile?symbol=MACA4>

<http://wisplants.uwsp.edu/scripts/detail.asp?SpCode=MAICAN>