

Woolly Violet 'Rubra' (*Viola sororia*)

4-6" robust leafy mounds.

CT native, found in moist to wet soils, disturbed areas, open woodlands, thickets, meadows, on streambanks.

Numerous ruby-red flowers, on little stems held slightly above the leaves, have 5 rounded petals. The top four petals flag in pollinators. The lower petal serves as a landing strip: it has linear markings that guide pollinators to the small nectar-containing spur at the rear of the petal. Tiny hairs near the spur allow insects to grab on as they push their heads inside. The hairs also prevent rain and dew from getting in and diluting the nectar. Blooms April-May, for about 4 to 6 weeks. The erect flower stem droops slightly, as if bending its head toward the ground - perhaps accounting for the flower's ancient association with love and modesty.

2-3" downy heart-shaped rich-green scalloped leaves.

Sun to shade. Prefers part shade.
Moist to average soil. Prefers rich moist soils.
Easily grown in shadier areas.
Spreads by seed (insect-pollinated in the spring, self-pollinating later in the season), and by thick horizontal rhizomes.
Tends to form small vegetative colonies, so choose a site where you would be happy to have it spread.

Lovely massed and left to spread undisturbed in open woodland gardens, wildflower gardens, native plant gardens and naturalized areas. Good small scale ground cover for areas along walkways or under shrubs. Pretty with spring bulbs. Use in containers, and in spring bouquets.

Flowers edible in salads, desserts, jellies, candied. Leaves are high in Vitamins A and C, and can be used in salads or cooked as greens.

Attracts pollinators in the spring, including bee-flies, and Mason and Halictid bees.

Larval host for many types of Fritillary butterflies.
Seeds attract birds, including Bobwhite, Doves, and Wild Turkey, and small mammals.

Foliage occasionally browsed by deer and rabbits, but not a preferred food source.

Photos 1, 2: Jelitto Perennial Seeds
jelitto.com/Seed/GOLD+NUGGET+SEED/VIOLA+sororia+Rubra+-Seeds.html

Photos 3, 4: K. Chayka, Minnesota Wildflowers
minnesotawildflowers.info/flower/common-blue-violet

Photo 5: Paj Nra Yang, University of Wisconsin-LaCrosse
bioweb.uwlax.edu/bio203/2010/yang_paj/adaptation.htm

Photo 6: Leo Papandreou
[flickr.com/photos/manualcrank/3533790123/sizes/o/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/manualcrank/3533790123/sizes/o/)

