Goldenseal
(Hydrastis canadensis)

6-12” x 12-16” bold-textured groundcover. Grows slowly to form small dense colonies via its thick yellow rhizomes.

CT native, found in rich hardwood forests, wooded slopes and valleys.
An endangered plant: *Please see more information below.**

2 large fuzzy toothed maple-like leaves with 5-7 deep lobes, alternated on an upright unbranched purplish fuzzy stem. The upper leaf is nearly stalkless, the one below has a 2” stalk. In spring, leaves are 4” across, then expand to 10-15” across by fruiting time. Leaves attractive into early fall.

The upper leaf is topped, April-May, with a single showy ½-¾” white flower, which has no petals, but does have a tuft of about 50 spreading white stamens with pale yellow-green tips.

In late summer a single showy raspberry-like scarlet-red fruit on a short stalk seems to sit on the upper leaf.

Part shade to shade. 70-75% shade is ideal.
Moist well-drained cool rich humusy organic loamy soil, slightly acid to neutral (if pH less than 5.5, can add lime. If soil low in phosphorus, use slow-release natural rock phosphate). Without adequate moisture, plant goes into early dormancy.
Responds well to abundant leaf mold and compost, and also to moderate fertilization: all encourage large dark foliage and good fruiting. Winter cover with fallen leaves preferred. Good siting is key to success with this plant.

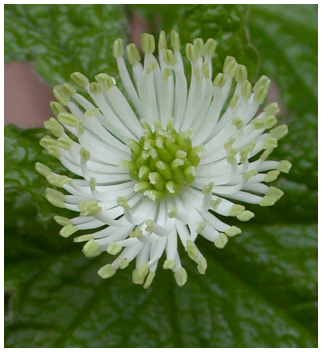
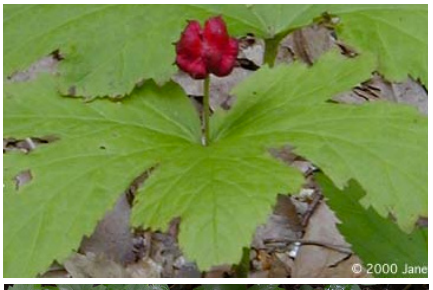
An excellent woodland groundcover, that can also be used for shaded naturalized plantings or wild gardens.

Attracts bees.
Fruits attract birds, which disperse the seeds.

**While all parts of Goldenseal are toxic, the plant has a long history of medicinal use. Native Americans used it for many maladies, from cancer to tuberculosis. Early Americans settlers followed suit.*

Medicinal effectiveness has never been scientifically demonstrated, but Goldenseal may have anti-bacterial and anti-inflammatory properties. It is now used over-the-counter for stomach problems, colds, and more.

Goldenseal was once common, but is now absent in many areas, and endangered everywhere else, due both to habitat loss and, importantly, to relentless overcollection by herb dealers.

Goldenseal is easy to cultivate, though, and inexpensive to buy. Many herbalists urge caution in choosing goldenseal products, as ingredients may have been harvested in an unsustainable manner, rather than being organically cultivated.

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