

“Jewelweed” by Sally Cureton

Even though it is getting late in the season for most flowers, there are still a few to be found providing some color to the landscape. Two examples are jewelweed and chicory. One is a native plant and the other was introduced to this country in the 1800's. Both are to be found in and around Massanutten Village.

Jewelweed, or touch-me-not, is a tall herb, growing from 2 to 6 feet high. You can find it in the Rockingham Springs Arboretum near the spring house. It likes moist areas, so it is frequently found along the edges of streams and marshes throughout the United States with the exception of Wyoming, Montana and the southwest, including California. It is a relative of the annual *impatiens* plant many of us put in our yards each year.

Spotted jewelweed (*impatiens capensis*) has coarsely toothed leaves and clustered, showy, orange flowers. These flowers are in the shape of a tube or trumpet, about an inch long and nod from thin, threadlike stems. Dew or rain will bead up on the leaves forming little droplets which gave rise to the common name of jewelweed. A similar but different species has yellow flowers (*impatiens pallida*). In the fall, when the seed pods are ripe, just touching a flower from either plant will cause it to burst open, flinging seeds in all directions. Hence the name of touch-me-not.

Hummingbirds and butterflies are attracted to the showy flowers to collect nectar. Jewelweed is commonly found growing near stinging nettle (which does sting). Native Americans used the watery plant juices to relieve itching and irritation associated with poison ivy, stinging nettle and insect bites. Knowledgeable hikers still look for it when they have brushed up against poison ivy on the trail.

Another lovely flower found from June through October in fields and along roadsides is chicory. Many people dismiss this plant, but it sure does brighten up a barren patch of land. *Cichorium intybus* is a blue-flowered perennial plant of the family Asteraceae and grows to a height of 1 to 4 feet. Each stiff stem has several showy flower heads with square-tipped, fringed ray flowers. Only a few flower heads open at a time and each lasts only one day. When cultivated, its leaves are eaten as a vegetable or salad, or its roasted and ground roots are used as a flavouring additive in or substitute for coffee. Chicory is native to Europe and was introduced into the United States late in the 19th century.