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Claytonia virginica

SPRING BEAUTY is a perennial. Native to eastern North America it has small, dark pink veined, white or pink flowers.

It is also known as Claytonia, Elf rose, Fairy spuds, Good-morning Spring, Grass flower, Groundnut, May flower, Miskodeed, Musquash, Narrow-leaved Spring beauty, Rose elf, Virginia springbeauty, and Wild potato.

Each flower blooms for one day to be supplanted from below by another.

Virginica means 'of or from Virginia (United States)' which itself was named after the English 'Virgin Queen' Elizabeth I (1533-1603).

The chestnutty-tasting (*Castanea*), nutritious tuberous roots provided food for local North American Indian tribes, particularly the Iroquois and some of the Algonkin. They were also eaten by the settlers, and are still sought after by some today as a potato (*Solanum tuberosum*) substitute and salad ingredient.

Spring beauty is held up as a symbol of Spring in *Hiawatha* by the renowned American poet Henry Longfellow (1807-1882).

.....
And the young man saw before him,
On the hearth-stone of the wigwam,
Where the fire had smoked and, smouldered,
Saw the earliest flower of Spring-time,
Saw the Beauty of the Spring-time,
Saw the Miskodeed in blossom.
.....

For the Iroquois Indians the plant provided a medicine used to treat convulsions in children – and it was also taken as a contraceptive.

The flower is being used today in medical research, particularly that relating to cancer.