



## BERKSHIRE BOTANICAL GARDEN

### What is Trailing Arbutus?



Trailing Arbutus (*Epigaea repens*) is a low growing evergreen member of the Heath family (Ericaceae). It is usually found in full or part shade in acidic soil with good drainage under evergreen trees such as white pine (*Pinus strobus*). A long-lived plant, Trailing arbutus slowly spreads to form larger colonies. In early Spring, it is often covered in waxy looking ½" wide flowers that range from pure white to deep pink. Its range covers the entire eastern US and Eastern Canada. Environmental disturbances such as logging or brush removal or grazing lead to a decline of populations which is why this plant has become rarer over

time. It can be difficult to establish Trailing arbutus but once established populations usually remain stable in the absence of disturbance. Occasionally animals will browse the foliage but typically it suffers little damage from wild animals. The plant is the larval host of the Hoary Elfin (*Callophrys polia*) butterfly. Some Trailing arbutus associates are Wintergreen (*Gaultheria procumbens*) and Canada mayflower (*Maianthemum canadense*). I know of a large patch of this plant in a woodland I walk in and each year I take photos of it in bloom. This year it is covered in flower buds but so far none have opened so these are some photos from 2017 that I have of the plant.

- Drew Monthie  
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***Drew Monthie*** has operated Ecologic Consulting LLC, specializing in plant-driven design and consultation since 1998. He is based in the Shirt Factory building in Glens Falls, NY. He has been growing plants since the age of 4 and was influenced by his parents and grandparents who always had vegetable and perennial gardens. He worked in nurseries during high school and attended the BOCES horticulture program. After high school, he attended SUNY Cobleskill school where he earned an A.A.S. in Plant Science. After owning and operating a nursery/landscape business for about a decade, he returned to college to earn his B.S. in Ecology and then an M.A. in Ethnobotany. He has been teaching and designing courses as a Professor in the Natural Sciences for SUNY Empire State College for the last decade in the study of horticulture, botany, ethnobotany and ecology. He is also a photographer, and you can find some of his photographic work on his other website: [StarflowerStudioNY.com](http://StarflowerStudioNY.com).