

Symplocarpus foetidus



skunk cabbage

Family	Araceae	
Origin	Native	
WIS Code	OBL	CoC 7

DESCRIPTION

This perennial gives off a skunk-like odor to attract flies for pollination. Forming large colonies, it is one of the first plants to emerge in the spring, generating its own heat that melts surrounding snow. A rosette of bright green, net-veined, basal leaves emerges from the thick root stock after flowering. Leaves (to 60 cm long) on ridged leaf stems (to 30 cm long) are smooth, toothless, hairless and somewhat heart-shaped.

FLOWERS AND FRUITS

February through April. Flowers are in a fleshy oval yellow-purplish cluster (spadix) (2 cm in flower; 5 to 10 cm in fruit). The spadix is enclosed in a leaf-like purplish brown bract (spathe), that is curved at the top and open to one side. The spathe withers, and the oval seed-containing compound fruit with a bumpy surface develops.

HABITAT

Swamps, seepage swamps, bogs, and low floodplains.

SIMILAR SPECIES

S. foetidus can be confused with *Veratrum viride*, green false hellebore, also a spring emergent, but the later has leaves with parallel veins (not netted veins) and spike-like flower heads, not concealed within a spathe.



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Fruit



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Snow melt



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Flower



Arthur Haines

Veratrum viride