Virginia Strawberry, Wild Strawberry
Fragaria virginiana

3-12” ground-hugging densely clumping perennial. Shallow crowns rise from fibrous roots. Trailing stems, up to 2’ long, extending from clumps, seek vegetative gaps, then root and form new clumps. Plants can spread indefinitely, often forming patches and colonies.

CT native, found in both degraded and high quality habitats, from dry to moist fields, rocky areas, open woodlands/margins, cleared areas, by roadsides. Tolerates competition from taller plants, as it develops in early spring before many other plants, and then takes some shade after leaf-out. Associated with many other plants in its varied sites, such as Asters, Wild Geraniums, Golden Alexanders, Boneset, Black Cherries, Black Chokeberries, Oaks, and Elms.

Each bluish-green leaf, borne on a slender hairy petiole up to 6” long, has 3 1-2” toothed rounded wedge-shaped finely hairy leaflets.

Flower stalks hold loose clusters of 4-6 .5-.75” white flowers, each with 5 oval rounded petals and about 20 yellow stamens around a yellowish center. April-May for about 3-4 weeks.

1/2-1” delicious sweet-tart globe-shaped bright red strawberries. The fuzzy above-ground runners are sent out after fruiting.

Maroon and red fall foliage.

Sun to part shade. Dry to moist, well-drained soil. Prefers loamy fertile soil with organic material, but adaptable. Drought tolerant.

Very easy to cultivate, little or no maintenance, no watering (except to water well when planting), or fertilizer. Very disease tolerant.

A cool-season plant that grows actively during spring and fall, slowing down or becoming dormant after fruit set, during hot summer months. Site where heat and humidity moderated, away from strong drying winds.

A highly useful plant:

An excellent groundcover, lawn replacement, for woodland gardens and difficult sites. Extending itself into foliage gaps, it helps to prevent non-native weed invasion, as well as delighting in intermingled species compositions. Provides erosion control on slopes.

Edible. Eat raw, easy to freeze, dry, make jams with, etc. Leaves steeped in boiling water make tea high in Vitamin C, like the fruit. This species is the original parent of 90% of all currently cultivated strawberries, which are hybrids of our native (for excellent taste) and a South American strawberry (for increased size).

Pollinators and wildlife. One of the very best plants for countless pollinators. Special value to native bees, including Little Carpenters, Cockoos, Masons, Halictids, and Andrenid Bees.

Attracts small butterflies and skippers. Larval host to Gray Hairstreak Butterflies.

Birds: Upland gamebirds/songbirds, including Pheasants, Thrashers, Towhees, Viros. Various mammals eat the fruit, including Cottontail Rabbits.

Eastern Box Turtles, Ornate Box Turtles, and Wood Turtles eat the fruit.