White Turtlehead
(Chelone glabra)

1-3' robust, stiffly erect, leafy-stemmed clumps.
CT native, found in wet woods, swamps, shores, along streams, low meadow, wet thickets.

Dense spikes with tight cluster of hooded, two-lipped flowers, white with a tinge of pink, resembling turtleheads, July to September.

Upright square stems with 4-6” dark toothed lustrous narrowly-lance-shaped leaves.

Sun to shade, part shade ideal. Humusy, rich, wet to medium soils, moist preferred. Keep moist in full sun. If very shady, pinch back stem-ends in spring to reduce height, increase bushiness, and strengthen stems. Low-maintenance. Strong grower, naturalizes by underground rhizomes.

Use in shade borders, woodland gardens, bog or water gardens, rain gardens, wet meadows, on slopes. Streamside buffers.


The leaves taste bitter, so deer tend to avoid eating the plant.

Photo 1: Steve Baskauf
discoverlife.org/mp/20p?see=1&SOP2910&res=640
Photos 2, 4, 5, 7: North Central Conservation District
Photo 3: Mt. Cuba Center
mtcubacenter.org/plant-finder/details/chelone-glabra/
Photo 6: University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point
Mark Mittelstadt, Mineral Point;
wisplants.uwsp.edu/scripts/detail.asp?SpCode=CHEGLA1