

Virginia Bluebells (*Mertensia virginica*)

1-2' spring ephemeral, upright and clump forming.

Native NY south, found in moist rich woods,
river floodplains

Loose clusters of pink buds and flowers change
to fragrant nodding sky-blue bells, hanging on
arching leafy stalks. Flowers appear sequentially
over several weeks, March-May.

6" smooth oval leaves emerge deep purple,
then turn blue-green when exposed to sun.

Part sun to shade. Spring sun and summer shade
ideal, i.e. under deciduous trees.
Well-drained soil, moist in spring.
Can tolerate some drought in summer.

Foliage dies to the ground by mid-summer as
the plant goes dormant, so it's helpful to
interplant with ferns, etc. in borders.

Spectacular in masses, in woods, with wildflowers.

18th century garden writers commonly referred to the flowers
As "Jefferson's blue funnel flowers" because
Thomas Jefferson grew them at Monticello, his home.

Attracts long-tongued bees, including honeybees,
bumblebees, Miner bees, seeking pollen and nectar.

Provides nectar to hummingbirds, butterflies, skippers,
and Sphinx moths, including hummingbird moths.

Photo 1

Christian Hummert (Ixitixel)
[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/
File:Mertensia_virginica_\(Flower\).jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Mertensia_virginica_(Flower).jpg)

Photos 2, 6

David G. Smith
Delaware Wildflowers
delawarewildflowers.org/plant.php?id=1274

Photos 3, 4

Missouri Botanic PlantFinder
mobot.org/gardeninghelp/plantfinder

Photo 5

Derek Anderson
University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point
[wisplants.uwsp.edu/scripts/
detail.asp?SpCode=MERVIR](https://wisplants.uwsp.edu/scripts/detail.asp?SpCode=MERVIR)

