

# SAXIFLORA

PLATE 2

**Chrysogonum virginianum**  
(*Asteraceae*)

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*Chrysogonum virginianum*

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Bailey's Cyclopaedia of Horticulture tells us that this plant is of little merit horticulturally. Today, we might very well say that denouncement was foisted on our subject before rock gardening became an integral part of American horticulture. One attribute we can pay to rock gardening is, that it has brought about a realization and an appreciation of the value of our native plants.

For the garden of the beginner who wishes to grow only the easier plants, for the large rock garden, and for the edge of the woodsy path, *Chrysogonum virginianum* must be rated as a useful and a showy plant. Moreover, it is one with good qualities that many of less lowly degree do not have. It remains in flower for a very much longer period than most and, when given the proper setting, has a great deal of inherent value as a garden plant. On Long Island it remains at its best for a full month, commencing with its golden-yellow flowers the second week of May. During the ensuing month, it is laden with blossoms and up to September a few solitary blooms will be found.

This plant is confined in nature to the Eastern States from Maryland to Florida, mostly in the Piedmont and Coastal Plain. At the same time, it does stretch inland and is found intermittently as far west as Louisiana. Usually, it will be growing in deciduous woods; occasionally, it will be seen in light hemlock shade. It is always at its best in deep humus soil.

It became popular among rock gardeners after the 1933 expedition to the Southern Appalachians by Messrs. Everett and Alexander. Since then, more nurserymen dealing in perennial herbs are handling it.

In the Eastern United States, there are two very distinct species of this genus and *C. virginianum* should not be confused with *C. australe* Alexander which, as its name implies, is found farther south and could not be expected to persist for long as far north as New York. The latter species is a smaller plant in all its parts, and is easily recognized by the runners it emits from a single crown, much in the manner of a strawberry plant. *C. virginianum* has no runners but increases its growth by a creeping or stoloniferous rootstock.

No difficulties will arise in the propagation of *C. virginianum*. Good seed of the preceding year will germinate freely, if sown in pans or directly in a frame or other protected spot in April. The easiest way to increase one's stock is by division in late September or early spring. Summer cuttings can be rooted in a sandy medium.

*Chrysogonum virginianum* is an herbaceous perennial, capable of increasing from the base in one season into clumps of twelve to fifteen inches spread and rising up to ten inches. It is distinctly hairy throughout. The leaves, edged with shallow rounded teeth are basal and opposite. Although acute at the apex they are broadly elliptic, merging into a winged stalk or petiole. They are of a flimsy texture. The basal leafblades are up to four inches long with the petioles of equal length. Flowers first appear from winter rosettes from which lateral branches elongate. The flowers may be terminal or rising from the axils on peduncles that are one to four inches long. The involucre consists of five sepal-like green bracts. The solitary flower head, up to one and one-half inches across, consists of about five yellow rays that are three-toothed at the tip, the central tooth being smallest. A ray is up to one-half inch long. Var. *dentatum* Gray differs in that it grows slightly higher and the leaves are strongly serrate instead of crenate.

JAMES G. ESSON