



PHOTO BYKEN MOORE

It helps to lie on the ground to look up into the flower of an American trout lily.

FLORA
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For years and years, I've believed that we have only one species of trout lily in our area, but now I'm advised that we have two. The common one that we see in our local woods is the dimpled trout lily, *Erythronium umbilicatum*, thusly called because of the little indentation at the tip of the seed pod. The more common one flowers earlier and is smaller than the rarer American trout lily, *E.*

americanum, which is larger and flowers a little later. If you walk different trails frequently, you may discover both of them. Don't be concerned about which one you are seeing; just make certain you get yourself out in the woods to see them, to "hold infinity in the palm of your hand." If you don't get out on weekly walks at this time of year, you're missing a lot. If you want a few trout lilies in your own garden, check out the

Botanical Garden's plant sale. There are pots of seedling trout lilies on the sale benches right now. Get a couple and in a few years you'll have your own little patch and you won't have to panic about missing them!

Special Note: I'm going out on a trout lily search on Saturday, March 7, in Carrboro's Adams Tract nature preserve. You're welcome to join me at 3:00 p.m. at the trailhead kiosk below the playground of Wilson Park. Bring along some kids to lead the way!



Willie Mae Houck, 1984

A battered silver aluminum frying pan hangs on a wooden plaque over the lunch counter at Sutton's Drug Store in Chapel Hill. It honors 32-year-veteran short-order cook Willie Mae Houck, who, from 1956-1988, was a force to be reckoned with. "She was the hardest working woman I ever saw," says Sutton's lunch counter manager Don Pinney, who worked with Willie Mae for 10 years before she was forced to quit after a heart attack on the job. Don, himself a 30-year-veteran at Suttons, had Willie Mae's venerable frying pan mounted. When I made this photo in 1984 of Willie Mae and wait staffer Margaret Durham, I remember Willie Mae giving me a hard time; she ran that grill with an iron fist.

But underneath that exterior, Willie Mae "was like family," Don remembers. "Willie knew about everybody's order when they came in the door," he says, shaking his head. "She was *something else!*" Sutton's owner and pharmacist John Woodard agrees. When Willie Mae died of a second heart attack that same year, practically the whole town turned out for her service. Woodard remembers a law-enforcement officer standing at attention at every intersection all the way from Walker's Funeral Home to the rural burial, all saluting as Willie Mae passed by. "They literally stopped traffic for her at every cotton-picking intersection. She was just a little ol' short-order cook — but she knew everybody. I've never seen anything to beat it!"



A THOUSAND WORDS
BY JOCK LAUTERER

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