



Buds Become Blossoms!

Spring is the time when buds on tree branches and shrubs begin to open up into flowers. Look for the following buds and flowers on your next hike, and see if you can match each bud to its description and the flower it will turn into.



Red Maple

It's easy to see how the red maple got its name. Their red buds form in clusters at multiple locations along their red twiggy branches. These buds blossom into flowers in April or early May, usually just before the tree leaves out. The flowers are "fire-truck" red and have five small petals that hang down.



Flowering Dogwood

As you walk along the trail look for these grayish, chocolate chip-shaped buds on the tips of branches. These buds will blossom into flowers in April or early May. Although the flowers appear to be white, the true flowers are found in the tiny, yellowish-green cluster in the center. The white "petals" are actually special leaves called bracts. Sometimes you may be lucky enough to see a flowering dogwood with pink bracts.



Rhododendron

Shaped like a raindrop, the lime green buds of the rhododendron have bracts that are edged in red. Depending upon elevation and species, the blooms may open anytime between April and June. The large, clustered flowers range from white to light pink to dark pinkish-purple. The brightest colored flowers are found at higher elevations, so you may want to visit the mountains!



Tulip Poplar

Tulip poplars have long, thin, brown buds that grow at the tips of branches. In May, these buds swell into large green bulbs before blossoming. If you look high up in the tree, you may see the greenish-yellow cup-shaped flowers. The flowers look like tulips, thus the tree's name – tulip poplar. Late in the season, you can find these flowers on the forest floor. Take this opportunity to examine their bright colors and count the number of petals... there should be six.

