

# Native Plant Spotlight by Krys Kirkwood

## **Achlys triphylla – Vanilla leaf, deer foot, sweet after death**



This spreading perennial can be found growing in moist, shady forests, glades, openings and forest edges, especially along stream banks, at low to middle elevations; common and locally abundant. Can be recognized by the leaves that are divided into three fan-shaped coarsely toothed leaflets atop 4-15 inch stems (resembles a goose foot or a deer foot to some). A single stem, taller than the leaf, holds spike of small white flowers with long stamens giving a starry look. Berries are reddish-purple in color. It is called vanilla leaf for the sweet smell of the dried leaves. Some native peoples used the plant as an insect repellent, and the dried leaves were hung in bunches in houses to keep flies and mosquitoes away. The dried leaves were also used to perfume the house with their sweet vanilla scent. *Achlys* means 'mist', describing the misty clouds of tiny white flowers.

## **Maianthemum racemosum – False Solomon's seal, Large False Solomon's seal (Smilacina racemosa)**



False Solomon's seal is a perennial lily that grows 12-27 inches tall, with slender, upright arching stems, and blooms mid-spring. Pyramid-shaped clusters of creamy, white flowers appear at the terminal end of stalk. Can be strongly perfumed. Berries are round, fleshy, and red in color, quite showy. This plant can be found growing in moist forests, stream banks, meadows and clearings; widespread at low to subalpine elevations. The berries were eaten by some native peoples, but they're not very palatable. Some boiled the roots and drank the tea for strong medicinal purposes (not recommended) or they mashed the root and used it as a poultice. False Solomon's seal makes a good ornamental foliage plant in shaded gardens, and it is easy to transplant.

*I strongly urge leaving any of our native plants undisturbed. Enjoy them in their natural environment. Seek out nurseries and professionals who sell and/or deal with natives if you want to add any to your garden.*

- Photos: Krys Kirkwood
- Reference: Plants of the Pacific Northwest Coast by Pojar and Mackinnon  
Wildflowers of the Pacific Northwest by Mark Turner and Phyllis Gustafson