

# BWSR Featured Plant

**Name: Large-flowered bellwort (*Uvularia grandiflora*)**

**Plant Family: Colchicaceae (Autumn-crocus)**

*Large-flowered bellwort is named for its nodding, bell-shaped flowers. Its perfoliate leaves are pierced by the stem.*

*Rounded, three-lobed capsules contain seeds that attract ants.*

**Courtesy Photos**



A perennial herbaceous plant native to deciduous forests, large-flowered bellwort blooms in spring about the same time as trillium and wild geranium. Its nodding, bell-like flowers, larger than those of other *Uvularia* species, give this plant its common name. Seeds of large-flowered bellwort bear small food bodies that attract ants, which bring the seeds back to their nests, remove the food bodies and leave the seeds to germinate. This method of dispersal moves seeds away from the parent plant and to a site that may provide better protection from predators.

## Plant Stats

**STATEWIDE WETLAND INDICATOR STATUS:** None

**PRIMARY USES:** Pollinator benefits, woodland plantings and shade gardens

## Identification

Stems of large-flowered bellwort are smooth and slightly blue-green. Above the midpoint, mature stems often branch into two or three parts, each nodding at the end. Oblong or elliptical leaves grow up to 6 inches long and 2 inches wide, their bases pierced by the stems.

Leaves are medium green above and light green below with parallel veins. Flowers bloom from April into June, producing yellow, slightly twisted petals and sepals growing 1 to 2 inches long. The plant produces rounded, three-lobed seed capsules.

## Planting Recommendations

Large-flowered bellwort grows best in dappled shade and moist, humus-rich soils. It is a good choice for woodland gardens or margins

and plantings under shade trees. Seeds, bare-root stock and potted plants are available at some native plant nurseries.

## Uses

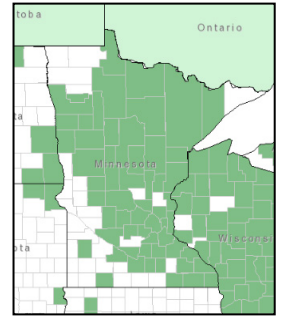
Large-flowered bellwort offers nectar and pollen to several insects, including bumblebees, sweat bees and mining bees. The plant also has a place in shade gardens, especially where growers are interested in native plant cultivation and

pollinator gardening. Unlike some other spring-blooming plants of the deciduous forest floor, large-flowered bellwort is not ephemeral. Although it blooms only in spring, its leaves and stems persist through summer.

## Range

Large-flowered bellwort is found in moist deciduous forests of the Eastern United States and Canada. This forest floor species is vulnerable to deer browsing. It's also susceptible to loss of habitat

from development as well as displacement by non-native plants such as buckthorn and garlic mustard. Removing invasive species can restore bellwort, an indicator of an intact forest floor community.

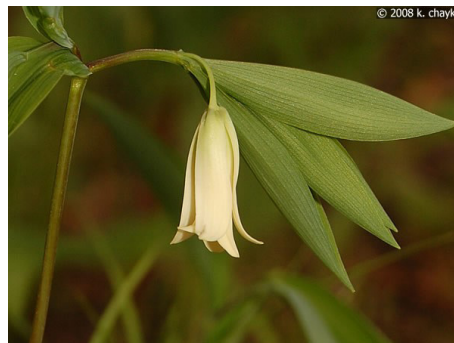


Range map source: USDA NRCS Plants Database

## Similar Species

Sessile-leaf bellwort (*Uvularia sessilifolia*) is a smaller plant with leaves that are not pierced by its stems. Flowers are a half-inch to 1 inch long, and pale yellow. Early growth of

smooth Solomon's seal (*Polygonatum biflorum*) is similar to bellwort, but its leaves are not perfoliate and its flowers are produced along the stem in the leaf axils.



**From left:** Side-by-side examples illustrate the differences between large-flowered bellwort, sessile-leaved bellwort (Photo Credit: Katy Chayka, Minnesota Wildflowers) and smooth Solomon's seal. The photo of smooth Solomon's seal was taken at the same time as large-flowered bellwort. It shows flower buds just emerging from the leaf axils.

## References

Illinois Wildflowers: [http://www.illinoiswildflowers.info/woodland/plants/lf\\_bellwort.htm](http://www.illinoiswildflowers.info/woodland/plants/lf_bellwort.htm)

Minnesota Wildflowers: <https://www.minnesotawildflowers.info/flower/large-flowered-bellwort>

Pollinators of Native Plants, by Heather Holm. Pollination Press LLC, Minnetonka, Minnesota. 2014.

Developed by Susan Nelson