

Key to Common Violet Species in New York and New England

- 1a. Plants are stemmed. Flowers are borne on peduncles (stalks) that arise from leaf axils. An individual stem may bear more than one flower. Stolons are not produced.
 - 2a. Stem leaves are various, but not heart-shaped. Plants are taprooted annuals.
 - 3a. Sepals noticeably longer than the petals. [*Viola arvensis*]
 - 3b. Sepals shorter than, or same length as the petals. [*Viola tricolor*]
 - 2b. Stem leaves are heart-shaped. Plants are perennials from a rhizome.
 - 4a. Corollas are yellow. [*Viola pubescens*]
 - 4b. Corollas are white, blue, lavender or purple.
 - 5a. Corollas are white.
 - 6a. Petals are tinted yellow inwardly, such that the flower appears to have a yellow throat. At least the upper two petals are tinted purple on the back side. The spur is relatively short, 1 to 2 mm. [*Viola canadensis*]
 - 6b. Petals are solid white, not tinted with other colors. The spur is relatively longer, 3 to 6 mm. [*Viola striata*]
 - 5b. Corollas are various shades blue, lavender or purple.
 - 7a. Lateral petals are bearded. The spur is moderately long, 4 to 8 mm. Stems are ascending or erect. [*Viola labradorica*]
 - 7b. Lateral petals are not bearded. The spur is very long, 10 - 20 mm, Stems are often spreading to reclining. [*Viola rostrata*]
- 1b. Plants are stemless. A solitary flower is borne on a peduncle (stalk) that arises directly from the rhizome. Stolons may be produced in some species.
 - 8a. Corollas are yellow. [*Viola rotundifolia*]
 - 8b. Corollas are white, blue, lavender or purple.
 - 9a. Corollas are white.
 - 10a. Leaves are lanceolate to ovate, generally longer than broad, and tapering gradually or abruptly to the base, without basal notch; (i.e., not cordate).

- 11a. Leaves are lanceolate or lance-ovate, tapering gradually to the petiole. [*Viola lanceolata*]
- 11b. Leaves are ovate to broadly ovate, tapering abruptly to the petiole. [*Viola primulifolia*]
- 10b. Leaves are ovate to rotund in outline, with a basal notch; (i.e., cordate).
- 12a. Plants do not produce stolons. Leaves are usually pubescent; cordate-rotund or kidney-shaped, tips rounded. [*Viola renifolia*]
- 12b. Plants produce stolons. Leaves are glabrous or pubescent; cordate-ovate or cordate-rotund; tips rounded, obtuse or acute.
- 13a. Leaves are strictly glabrous. Lateral petals are often bearded. Peduncles are usually green. Not colony-forming as readily as 13b. [*Viola pallens* / syn: *Viola macloskeyi*]
- 13b. Leaves are sparsely pubescent, especially on the upper surface, toward leaf-base. Lateral petals are usually not bearded. Peduncles are often reddish. Plants may form colonies from short rhizomes. [*Viola blanda*]
- 9b. Corollas are blue, lavender or purple; white forms may occur in some species.
- 14a. Some or all leaves are lobed along the lateral margins and at the tip.
- 15a. Leaf blades are lanceolate to lance-ovate in outline, much longer than wide, and more or less narrowed toward the tip. Lobes, when present, are confined to the lower one-third of the leaf blade. [*Viola sagittata* var. *sagittata*]
- 15b. Leaf blades are broadly ovate in outline, as wide as long, or nearly so, obtuse or rounded at the tip. Lobes are present along the lateral margins and at the tip of the leaf.
- 16a. Lateral petals are bearded. Stamens are largely obscured by beard hairs.
- 17a. Leaves are of two different forms. Early-season leaves tend to lack lateral lobes. Leaves produced during the flowering period and later have evident, irregular, lateral and terminal lobes. [*Viola palmata*]
- 17b. Leaves are of a single form, not very differentiated between early and later stages. Lateral and terminal lobes are variable in length and width.

- 18a. Leaf blades and petioles are glabrous. Coastal.
[*Viola brittoniana*]
- 18b. Leaf blades are pubescent on the lower surface.
Petioles may be pubescent or not. More widely
distributed. [*Viola subsinuata*]
- 16b. Lateral petals are not bearded. Stamens are clearly visible.
[*Viola pedata*]
- 14b. Lateral leaf margins are unlobed; the base of the leaf blade is
is cordate (with two basal lobes and an evident notch).
- 19a. Foliage (leaves and petioles) are glabrous or nearly so.
Lateral petals are bearded or not.
- 20a. Lateral petals are bearded, with hairs shorter than
1 mm, dilated apically, appearing knobbed. Spur is
relatively short (2 to 3 mm). [*Viola cucullata*]
- 20b. Lateral petals are not bearded. Spur is longer (4 to 7 mm),
evident. [*Viola selkirkii*]
- 19b. Foliage (leaves and petioles) are moderately to densely
pubescent. Lateral petals are bearded, with hairs greater
than 1 mm long, narrowed (pointed) apically.
- 21a. Foliage is conspicuously and densely pubescent.
Spurs are moderately long (up to 7 mm).
- 22a. Plants are stoloniferous. Spurs 5 to 7 mm
(evident). Leaves are ovate, blades cordate at
base, with an evident sinus. Capsules are hairy.
[*Viola odorata*]
- 22b. Plants do not produce stolons. Spurs are 2 to 3 mm.
Leaves are ovate, blades rounded to somewhat
truncate at base, scarcely cordate or lobed.
Capsules are glabrous. [*Viola sagittata var. ovata*]
- 21b. Foliage is sparsely to moderately pubescent, less
dense. Spurs are short (2 to 3 mm long).
- 23a. Lower (spur) petal is bearded; sepal margins
are ciliate. Early leaves are purplish on lower
surfaces; green later. [*Viola septentrionalis*]

23b. Lower petal is not bearded or with a few scattered hairs. Sepals are sparsely ciliate toward the base. Leaves are green all season. [*Viola sororia*]

Species that may not be present in most localities, not included in the above key. This does not imply that they are unrecognized, or that they are synonyms.

<i>Viola adunca</i>	stemmed	anthocyanic	spur 5-7 mm	bearded	perennial
<i>Viola bicolor</i>	stemmed	various	spur 1-1.5 mm	bearded	annual
<i>Viola affinis</i>	unstemmed	anthocyanic	spur 2-3 mm	bearded	perennial
<i>Viola hirsutula</i>	unstemmed	anthocyanic	spur 2-3 mm	bearded	perennial
<i>Viola nephrophylla</i>	unstemmed	anthocyanic	spur 2-3 mm	bearded	perennial
<i>Viola novae-angliae</i>	unstemmed	anthocyanic	spur 2-3 mm	bearded	perennial
<i>Viola palustris</i>	unstemmed	anthocyanic	spur 1-3 mm	bearded	perennial
<i>Viola pectinata</i>	[Taxonomic status undetermined. Similar to <i>V. brittoniana</i> .]				

Reference for the above list: Flora of North America Editorial Committee, editors. Flora of North America, vol. 6, Oxford University Press, New York, NY.