

**Violet Key Schematics**  
**(Plants of New York and New England)\***  
**April 18, 2023**

This page complements the two keys to the violets which are presented on this website. One of the keys is a traditional, text only, dichotomous key. The other is an interactive, pictorial, dichotomous key, which includes both text and photographic images. Though these keys are not particularly long, and the number of species covered is not great, it is nevertheless possible for a reader to get lost in the details, and fail to understand the guiding logic employed. The logic of a key is instrumental in learning about the represented species.

This page presents the outlines of the logic in the keys. The important characteristics for understanding the violets include the following: growth form (stemmed or unstemmed), corolla color, leaf margin characters, (lobes or the absence of lobes), petal pubescence (bearded or not), stolon production or not, and spur length.

Group 1 and 2 include species that produce above-ground stems upon which flowers are borne.

The remaining groups include species that do not produce above-ground stems.

Group 3 includes the stemless species with white corollas.

Groups 4 and 5 include stemless species with blue, lavender or purple corollas.

Group 6 includes a stemless species with yellow corollas.

Readers who wish to view additional characteristics may continue with one or both of the other two keys featured here.

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**Group 1: Stemmed; leaves various, but not heart-shaped; annuals from a taproot.**

*Viola arvensis* - sepals noticeably longer than the petals.

*Viola tricolor* - sepals shorter than, or same length as the petals.

**Group 2: Stemmed; leaves heart-shaped; perennials from a rhizome.**

*Viola canadensis* - corollas white; bearded; spurs 1 - 2 mm long.

*Viola striata* - corollas white; bearded; spurs up to 4 mm long.

*Viola labradorica* - corollas blue/violet; bearded; spurs 4 - 5+ mm long.

*Viola rostrata* - corollas blue/violet; not bearded; spurs 7 - 12 mm long.

*Viola pubescens* - corollas yellow; bearded; spurs 2 - 2.5 mm long.

**Group 3: Stemless, corollas white, margins unlobed, spurs 1-3 mm long.**

*Viola blanda* - not bearded; stoloniferous; leaves ovate to rotund.

*Viola pallens* - bearded; stoloniferous; leaves ovate to rotund.

*Viola renifolia* - sometimes bearded; not stoloniferous; leaves rotund to kidney-shaped.

*Viola lanceolata* - not bearded; stoloniferous; leaves lanceolate to lance-ovate.

*Viola primulifolia* - bearded or not; stoloniferous; leaves lance-ovate to ovate.

**Group 4: Stemless; corollas blue/violet; margins lobed; not stoloniferous; spurs 2-3 mm.**

*Viola sagittata* (var. *sagittata*) - bearded.

*Viola palmata* - bearded; early leaves are unlobed; later leaves lobed.

*Viola brittoniana* - bearded; early and later leaves more or less the same; coastal.

*Viola subsinuata* - bearded; early and later leaves more or less the same.

*Viola pedata* not bearded.

**Group 5: Stemless; corollas blue/violet; margins unlobed.**

*Viola sagittata* (var. *ovata*) - bearded; not stoloniferous; spurs 2 - 3 mm long.

*Viola cucullata* - bearded; not stoloniferous; spurs 2 - 3 mm long.

*Viola selkirkii* - not bearded; not stoloniferous; spurs 4 - 7 mm long.

*Viola odorata* - bearded; stoloniferous; spurs 5 - 7 mm long.

*Viola sororia* - bearded; not stoloniferous; spurs < 3.2 mm long.^^

**Group 6: Stemless; corollas yellow; leaves ovate to rotund.**

*Viola rotundifolia* - margins unlobed; bearded; spurs 1-2 mm long.

\* Source: Flora of North America Editorial Committee, editors. Flora of North America, vol. 6, Oxford University Press, New York, NY.

^^ Source: Haines, Arthur. Flora Novae Angliae: A Manual for the Identification of Native and Naturalized Vascular Plants of New England. Copyright New England Wild Flower Society, 2011