



<https://kananaskis.org/prairie-crocus/>

[https://www.wildaboutflowers.ca/cmsAdmin/uploads/Prairie\\_Crocus\\_Seed\\_Head.gif](https://www.wildaboutflowers.ca/cmsAdmin/uploads/Prairie_Crocus_Seed_Head.gif)

## **Prairie Crocus** (*Pulsatilla nuttalliana*)

By Christine

Commonly known as the Pasque flower, surfacing late March through April close to Easter, this early native perennial herb is a *forb species*

(<https://albertaplantid.ca/forb-species/#:~:text=Forbs%20are%20herbaceous,plants%20and%20graminoid>), it may even be considered a weed! It has also been named prairie smoke due to its wispy appearance - first as a bud covered in white hairs protruding from a hairy stem, followed by a cluster of several seeds with long feathery plumes that sway in the wind, giving it another common name of Wind flower. The flower consists of 5 to 7 white, pale blue or purple sepals with a hairy underside and a center pistil surrounded by multiple yellow stamens. Small green leaves become more visible as the flower fades away.

This slow growing plant ranges from 2 to 14 inches in height tending to bloom at shorter heights, continuing growth while developing round shaggy seed heads after blooming. It is found on our sandy hillsides and tops of cliffs where winter snow first melts away. While it only blooms for two weeks this wildflower is essential for the first pollinators emerging after their winter hibernation including hoverflies, mining bees and bumble bee queens. Its' seeds are dispersed by wind and transported by anything that may happen to brush up against the plant. By June the seeds go dormant in dry conditions. The seeds self seed in wet conditions, using backward pointing hairs to corkscrew into the soil - the long feathery tail absorbs moisture and as it dries it twists pushing the seed into the soil where it will germinate.

This plant is poisonous to both plants and animals in its' 'raw' or fresh state, and should neither be touched nor eaten! However dried or cooked leaves have traditionally been used by First Nations as well as in modern medicine in anti-inflammation preparations. Remember it is always best to admire nature where it lies undisturbed, to help sustain naturally biodiverse ecosystems.

Resources:

<https://plantwatch.naturealberta.ca/choose-your-plants/prairie-crocus/index.html>

<https://albertaplantid.ca/forbs/prairie-crocus/>

[https://www.wildaboutflowers.ca/plant\\_detail.php?Prairie-Crocus-81](https://www.wildaboutflowers.ca/plant_detail.php?Prairie-Crocus-81)