

## Portulacaceae

### Purslane Family

Generally western in North America, there are 500 species worldwide, with only three in Nova Scotia. Small herbs, they are defined by have perfect flowers subtended by two sepals. The stamens vary in number from 3–11. Fruit is a hinged capsule.

#### Key to genera

- A. Introduced plant of disturbed soils; leaves wedge-shaped; flowers yellow; seeds small and numerous. *Portulaca*
- aa. Native plants of undisturbed habitats; leaves not wedge-shaped; flowers white; seeds fewer, 2–6. **B**
  - B. Flowers minute, white; seeds 2–3; leaves many, opposite; roots fibrous. *Montia*
  - bb. Flowers showy 1–2cm across, white with pink nectar guides; seeds 3–6; leaves a single opposite pair; plant from a deep tuber. *Claytonia*

### ***Claytonia* L.** **spring-beauty**

A genus of 28 North American species; only one is native to Nova Scotia. Usually perennial, they arise from a corm or fleshy taproot. Petals are white suffused with pink; plants appear in very early spring.

#### ***Claytonia caroliniana* Michx.** **Spring Beauty; claytonie de Caroline**



Photo by Martin Thomas

Unbranching and weakly erect stems arise from the deep taproot, which some relish as an edible. The stems bear a single pair of lanceolate or elliptic opposite leaves, each on a short petiole. Drooping pedicels form a terminal raceme. Flowers are white suffused with pink and marked by dark nectar guides.

One of our eagerly awaited spring ephemerals, flowering May 15 to early June.



Photo by Martin Thomas

Preferred habitat is deep fertile soil beneath deciduous forest.

Annapolis and Cumberland counties, to northern Cape Breton. Common at Cape Split, in the Cobequids and eastward on the mainland. Local in the western half of the province.

NF to ON, variously south to KS, AL and GA.

## ***Montia* L.**

Arctic-alpine, this is a genus of wetland or aquatic habitats. North America has nine species, with one infrequently seen in NS. It is separated from *Claytonia* on the basis of leaf and ovule numbers, size of the flowers and habitats.

### ***Montia fontana* L.**

**Blinks; Annual Water Minerslettuce; montie des sources**



Photo by June Swift

Annual in habit, it is a small species to 30cm, freely-branching and rooting from the leaf nodes. Leaves are opposite. Pedicels borne singly or paired from the leaf axils. Petals number five, white and forming a corolla tube, split on one side.

Flowers June-September.

Seepy slopes and rills, wet or brackish shores.

Northwest Arm Halifax (1883), Brier Island, Digby Co.; Port Hawkesbury, Inverness Co. Abundant on the east side of Burke Brook, Advocate, Cumberland Co.

Ranges from NF to AK, south in the east to ME; VA; west coast to CA; Greenland..

STATUS: ORANGE-listed in NS



Photo by June Swift



***Portulaca* L.**  
**Purslane**

Generally a genus of warm areas, only one of 100 worldwide reaches NS as an invader of disturbed soils. Succulent annuals, they usually have alternate leaves, crowded distally to form an involucre around the inflorescence.

***Portulaca oleracea* L.**  
**Common Purslane; pourpier potager**



Photo by Martin Thomas

A prostrate species, its tangled branches arise from a fleshy stem. Leaves are clavate on a short petiole, rarely exceeding 3cm in length. Flowers are tiny, pale yellow, opening only in full sun.

Flowers June to November.

Common and troublesome in gardens, especially in full-sun. Shade-intolerant.



*Photo by Martin Thomas*

Widespread throughout the Annapolis Valley, spreading to lighter soils elsewhere. Difficult to eliminate once established.

Throughout the continent; native to southern Asia.

