

### **What Does this Species Look Like?**

**Size:** Flowers are 2-5 inches long;  
height of plant is 1-3 feet

**Color:** Flowers are purple-brown and green  
covered in a red and yellow outer leaf; leaves  
are bright green

**General:** Flowers in March and the leaves  
unfold after the plant blooms

**Usually Found:** Woodland streams,  
swamps, marshes



### **Did You Know?**

- The name skunk cabbage (*Symplocarpus foetidus*) derives from the skunk-like smell that is released when the leaves of the plant are crushed. The plant emits this scent to attract pollinators, such as bees.
- Skunk cabbage has an amazing capacity to generate heat from stored energy; when the flowers bloom in late winter the temperatures within the buds can reach 70 degrees!
- The roots of the skunk cabbage can reach 12-feet long!
- Parts of the plant are toxic but others, such as the roots, can be used medicinally to treat coughs and muscle aches. The leaves of the plant can also be crushed and inhaled to relieve headaches.

### **What am I Observing?**

The timing (date) of:

- The emergence of  
flowers
- The emergence of  
leaves



### **Want to Find Out More?**

Contact Diane Husic, Audubon *TogetherGreen* Fellow,  
[phenology@lgnc.org](mailto:phenology@lgnc.org)

### **Why Collect this Data?**

This species is being monitored as a part of the Eastern PA Phenology Program to determine if this plant is impacted by environmental changes.

### **How Do I Report this Data?**

Observations can be reported as comments to the Eastern PA Phenology Blog:  
<http://watchingtheseasons.blogspot.com/>  
or sent to [phenology@lgnc.org](mailto:phenology@lgnc.org)

**What is Phenology?** According to the National Phenology Network, phenology refers to the study of “recurring plant and animal life cycle stages, or phenophases, such as leafing and flowering, maturation of agricultural plants, emergence of insects, and migration of birds.”

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