

**04/02/10: Rainbow Mountain Preserve,  
Madison, AL**

Spring is a wonderful time around here, and I'm lucky to have such nearby access to trails and forests, and those who visit the preserve and state park around here are always in for a treat if you enjoy wildflowers. So on that Friday afternoon I ventured up to the Rainbow Mountain Preserve on what's become my annual spring hunt for wildflowers. I took the Rainbow Mountain Loop Trail down toward the Spring Trail, where a lot of wildflowers are found here, and stopped to look at the sinkhole/cave and Blue Flag Iris that had not yet bloomed. I passed many trilliums, many without blooms, and I'm not certain if the colder than usual winter had anything to do with this, or if these were mostly a new crop of younger plants not yet old enough to produce blooms.

Passing the beautiful white Dogwoods, I took the Spring Trail down, stopping for photos of Shooting Stars (a fairly scarce wildflower in Alabama!) and many more purple and red Trilliums, some the size of a small plate. I did not, however, find the yellow Trilliums that were here last year. The spring was flowing well for a change, and it was nice to hear the gurgle of water as I made my way down the steep path to the intersection with the Rainbow Loop Trail. I headed right, which leads to the ridge and all of the interesting rock outcroppings and a slew of other wildflowers that prefer this almost microclimate. Wild Phlox, Pussyfoot, Rue Anemones and other plants that I couldn't identify greeted anyone who wandered by. After stopping for a moment at the top to take in the view southward, alternating hints of yellows and greens rolling away, I returned to the trailhead and headed home.