

## Spring Blooms Beneath Your Feet

While the area is best known for its tall forests, there are also rich, if short-lived, flora closer to the ground. What are called ephemeral plants come to life when the first thaw of spring begins to melt the thick carpet of snow that covers the ground. For a few weeks ample sunlight reaches the forest floor, and by the time leaves begin to appear on the trees above, these spring flowers have already come and gone. Because this growth period is so short, it takes many years for some of these plants to grow to the point of flowering. For example, the dogtooth violet takes eight years from germination to flowering, and the diminutive, white Obana-no-enrei-so (*Trillium kamtschaticum*) takes over a decade.