

Tiareella cordifolia Foamflower

Identification



Don't confuse foamflower with bishop's cap or alumroot – they're all similar. Foamflower has glossy leaves. Like alumroot and bishop's cap, they are lobed, but in foamflower the ends of each lobe are pointed rather than rounded like in heuchera. Bishop's cap leaves are more deeply dissected and appear on the flower stalk. Foamflower leaves, on the other hand, generally appear only at the bottom of the plant and the flower stalk is leafless most of the time. If they do appear on the

stalk, they are heart shaped and not nearly as pointy as bishop's cap. The flowers of

Tiareella have lots of long stamens that stick out past the ends of the petals and give the flower a foamy or frothy look. The flower stalks grow up to one foot tall and bloom from the bottom up, so the flower head sometimes has a pointed look to it. *Tiareella* spreads by stolons, a technical word for a stem that grows along the ground and grows into another plants. That's why it's such a good ground cover. *Tiareella* loves shady, rocky soil.



Natural History

The Cherokee and Iroquois liked to use foamflower for children – it soothed sore mouths and sore backs. They also gave to children to fatten them up. It was used as an eye and skin wash. The Latin name *tiarella* comes from the same root as tiara and refers to the shape of the pistil – the female part of the flower that takes in the pollen.

Conservation

Foamflower and its sister, heart-leaved foamflower, are endangered in New Jersey and Wisconsin. Many native plant lovers like to plant foamflower in their shade or rock gardens. If you choose to plant foamflower and are interested in preserving it as a species, make sure that you buy the species *Tiareella cordifolia*.