

Massachusetts “skunk cabbage” flower that smells like rotten flesh now in bloom

“Spring is in the air, but not all spring flowers smell sweet! One of the first native plants to bloom in early spring is skunk cabbage and can be found across much of New England and the northern parts of the country. Sometimes called swamp cabbage, it is found near streams and bogs and is characterized by its signature stench.

Skunk cabbage is one of just a few plants that exhibit thermogenesis, or the ability to generate heat. Inside the pod, called a spathe, can be 20 degrees warmer than the surrounding air temperature for nearly two weeks, even in the snow!

As its name suggests, this plant emits a somewhat skunk-like scent that can also smell like rotten flesh. The putrid odor lures in its pollinators, primarily carrion-feeding flies, and gnats. The leaves are high in calcium oxalate which will cause animals irritation in the mouth and throat if ingested.”-
Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife.



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