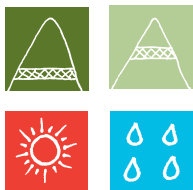


Fireweed



Evening Primrose Family

Chamerion angustifolium

ROCKY MOUNTAIN RELATIVES

Stemless Evening-Primrose

EASY IDENTIFICATION

Clusters of pink flowers on tall stems;
grow in sunny meadows



PIONEER FLOWER Like Aspen and Lodgepole Pine, Fireweed is a *pioneer species*. Following an avalanche, fire, construction or any disturbance, Fireweed is one of the first plants to grow in the unvegetated soil. This flower loves full sunlight. It spreads quickly from underground stems called *rhizomes* that send up new flowers next to the parent plant. This fast growth is important following a disturbance because the roots hold the soil in place preventing erosion and allow slower-growing plants to mature.

SLOW OPENING Dozens of pink flowers grow from a single Fireweed stem. It is very difficult to find a Fireweed stalk with all of the blossoms open at the same time! The bottom flowers open first, then, as they become pollinated, the flowers towards the top open. Bees are very attracted to Fireweed nectar and rub the pollen off of a few flowers on the plant, then they fly to a neighboring plant to find more blooming flowers. By forcing the bee to fly to a neighboring plant, the bee is less likely to pollinate a flower on the same stalk. The characteristic of plants opening only a few flowers at a time is called *protandry*.

FEATHERY SEEDS After the flowers have all dried up, the Fireweed stalk becomes a tangle of feathery seeds waiting to blow away on the wind.



Flower Many delicate flowers grow on the flower stalk.



SEEDS

Fluffy, cottony seeds form in late summer. Up to 80,000 seeds are produced on a single plant!



NECTAR

Fireweed is very attractive to bees because it is one of the most nectar-rich flowers in the region.



Leaf Long, thin leaves with an obvious main vein grow outward from the stem.



Habitat Fireweed grows in sunny areas that have been disturbed by fire, avalanche or construction.