

The gentians, which flower in early to late fall are some of the loveliest wildflowers to be seen at this time of year. Their showy, light to dark blue flowers are always a pleasure when encountered.

The gentians represented in Delaware are in the genera *Gentiana* and *Gentianopsis*, and all are in the family Gentianaceae. Another genus in the eastern U.S. that is considered a gentian is *Gentianella*, but species within this genus are not known from Delaware.

In Delaware, there are currently 6 species of native gentians known to occur and all are uncommon. In fact, two species are thought to be historical (not reported for 20 or more years), and two are considered to be extirpated (gone from the state).

<b>Common Name</b>	<b>Scientific Name</b>	<b>State Status</b>
fringe-top bottle gentian	<i>Gentiana andrewsii</i>	Historical
pine barren gentian	<i>Gentiana autumnalis</i>	Extirpated
Elliott's gentian	<i>Gentiana catesbaei</i>	Uncommon
soapwort gentian	<i>Gentiana saponaria</i>	Uncommon
striped gentian	<i>Gentiana villosa</i>	Historical
fringed gentian	<i>Gentianopsis crinita</i>	Extirpated

All of Delaware's gentians are perennial plants with the exception of the fringed gentian which is a biennial.

Gentians in Delaware can be found growing in habitat such as, moist meadows and edges, open woods, seeps, sandy swales, and stream banks.

The fringe-top bottle gentian, Elliott's gentian, soapwort gentian, and the striped gentian are also known as bottle, or closed gentians. This is because the flowers are shaped like bottles and are closed to partially open. An insect with the desire to obtain nectar from one of these species must wiggle and squeeze its way into the interior of the flower to reach the sweet taste of nectar it covets.

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