

## Fire Walk With Carrie

Wildside

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Is this a cross between the weird David Lynch genre and early Stephen King horror? No. I was meeting with an arborist extraordinaire earlier today and when we exhausted our arboricultural topics she showed me a picture of what she purported to be, scarlet campion.

I thought not – and for once was right – it was fire pink, *Silene virginica*. She encountered this great woodland wildflower with her husband Bill at Lake Hope State Park in southeast Ohio on Mother's Day. It is unusual to see such brilliant red color in the spring and summer woods.

Despite being red, *Silene* species are in the pink family, the Caryophyllaceae. A characteristic feature of many genera in this family is the cleft petals that you see in the image above. Chickweeds (*Stellaria* spp.) and carnation (*Dianthus* spp.) are also in the Carophyllaceae.

To complicate naming matters, the term "campion" (and I don't mean Jane) is a common name for other species of *Silene*, such as *S. vulgaris*, or bladder campion, that is a frequent volunteer in my back field and a common rock garden and bankside flower, *C. acaulis*, moss campion, as well as species of *Lychnis*. Campion's is also apparently a pizzeria and Italian restaurant in South Windsor, Connecticut. So many pizzas, so little time.

I have loved fire pink for 50 years; what I just learned is that a preferred pollinator is the ruby-throated hummingbird. Do not pick this pink; it is endangered or threatened in a number of states. Oh, by the way, the arborist and photographer of the fire pink above is Carrie Paulus of Horticultural Concepts, Inc. of Mogadore, Ohio.

Tags

[fire pink](#)

[Silene virginica](#)