

SPOTLIGHT

COMMON BLUE VIOLET



Two varieties of the common blue violet (*Viola sororia*) found growing wild in Center City.

Two centuries ago in Philadelphia the habitat of *Viola sororia* was reported to be dry woods along the Schuylkill River.¹ Nearly a hundred years later in this city, this violet was found to be hybridizing. This observation prompted speculation that hybridization could produce new forms on which natural selection could act, causing evolutionary change.² Today in Center City this violet thrives in lawns and pavement cracks, and its flowers vary in color and pattern. Perhaps adaptation of this species to Center City expresses, at least in part, evolution through hybridization, as hypothesized over a century ago.³