



"Cardinal-flowers kindle their spiral flames, and illuminate the dark nooks among the shrubbery." ... Nathaniel Hawthorne

LOBELIA cardinalis, often called "America's most vivid wildflower", is a very famous plant of great beauty that blooms during summer, not spring, like most of its woodland companions. The flowers are orchid-like, up and down the tall 3 to 4-ft stems often putting on a dazzling show in shady wet woods. Because of its beauty, the Cardinal Flower, once established, will be the pride and joy of any wildflower garden.

After much discussion, research, debate, (and our earlier failure) we selected this plant because it is a hardy native, easy to propagate, and a pollinator attract ruby-throated hummingbirds, swallowtail and sulphur butterflies, is deer and rabbit resistant, and the cut flowers will look great in a vase.

These seeds, from American Meadows, are hand-gathered from the wild by a seed specialist in the Finger Lakes region of New York state; they are the true wild species. (There are several hybrids of this wildflower; one with maroon-red leaves, which is not as cold-hardy as the native.)

How to Plant LOBELIA Seeds

You can start the seed at any time. There is no need for moist stratification. The seed is tiny and needs light to germinate. Just sow thinly on the surface of any soil or seeding mix and give it light. You also want moisture, so you may use a tented ziploc bag to hold in moisture, but make sure it isn't too wet.

Sow seeds in peat containers, cell packs or two inch pots, press into soil but do not cover with soil. **IMPORTANT:** These seeds need light to germinate. Kept around 70-75° F, germination is usually within 4-5 weeks.

The seeds are very very tiny, so you can't bury them at all and the soil needs to stay wet and warm to get germination. And when they first sprout, the plants are also very tiny and are easily drowned and covered with soil on watering. Spritzing is best. But once they have grown and have some size on them, they will grow rapidly.



These are low maintenance plants with vivid color and reliable growth. Full sun in cool climates, part sun in most areas, filtered shade in hottest climates. Ample water, rich soil. As they are perennials, cardinal flower typically will not bloom the first year.



CARDINAL FLOWER ~ *Lobelia cardinalis*
SUN/PARTIAL SHADE/WOODLAND

Helpful Links and articles

<http://www.hardyplant.org/articles/>

[Swift Lobelia Cardinalis Hummingbird Magnet November2013.pdf](#)

GCA Basic Plant Propagation, Sowing Seeds

<http://www.gcamerica.org/images/FCKUploads/file/Horticulture/PlantPropSEEDS-optimized.pdf>



COMPANION PLANTINGS

Chelone glabra, Turtlehead (white)

Lobeila siphilitica, (blue & white)

Lobeila spicata, pale Spiked Lobeila (white)

Lobeila 'Monet Moment', (pink hybrid)

Salvia, 'Mulberry Jam', (early bright pink)

Phlox paniculata (pink); *Veronicastrum virginicum* (white)

PHOTO: Cardinal flower, Prairie Blazing Star, Great Blue Lobelia and Swamp Milkweed

The gavel competition was started by Nancy Sherwood from the Stamford GC many years ago. She started it to encourage clubs and members to grow more and to make it a friendly competition and a learning experience for everyone. Remember, this should be a fun, friendly challenge and a learning experience for all. --- Description of the Zone 11 Gavel by Sylvia Abbott