

# Blue lobelia (*Lobelia siphilitica*)

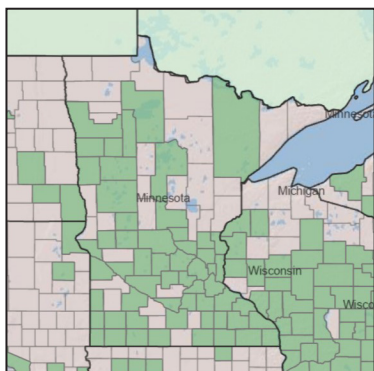
## Family: Lobelia (Lobeliaceae)

**DESCRIPTION:** From July to October, this perennial produces striking blue-violet flowers clustered at the top of the stem. Found throughout central and southern Minnesota, it prefers wet meadows, shorelines, wetlands and moist woodlands.

**USES:** This low-maintenance, showy plant attracts hummingbirds and other pollinators with its nectar and pollen. It is well-suited for shorelines, wetland edges, wet prairies and stormwater projects such as rain gardens. Deer and other herbivores tend to leave it alone because the plant contains lobeline, a bioactive compound that makes it unpalatable or toxic.

### REFERENCES:

[Minnesota Wildflowers](#)  
[Illinois Wildflowers](#)  
[Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center](#)  
[Xerces Society](#)



Range Map Credit: USDA Plants Database



Photo Credit: John Stelzner

## Planting Recommendations

Blue lobelia thrives in wet to moist soils with partial to full sun. It can be grown from seed or plugs. Once the capsules have dried and turned brown in the fall, the seeds are easy to remove. Seeds require cold, moist stratification to germinate, either outdoors over the winter or in a refrigerator for about two months. Because the seeds are very small, they should be broadcast directly on the soil surface. Fall seeding allows winter conditions to

stratify the seed and improves seed-to-soil contact. Plugs are widely available at native plant nurseries. They are relatively easy to establish if the soil remains consistently moist throughout the growing season. Avoid planting blue lobelia near tall or aggressive species, as it does not compete well. Companion plants include swamp milkweed, sneezeweed, prairie blazing star, cardinal flower, bottle gentian, New England aster and turtlehead.

**STATEWIDE  
WETLAND  
INDICATOR  
STATUS:** OBL

**ID:** Inch-long, tubular blue-violet flowers are arranged along an upright spike on plants that grow up to 4 feet tall. Individual flowers are composed of two smaller lobes on top, and three pointed lobes on the bottom. A small white patch marks the central lower lobe. Stems are ridged, sometimes with fine hairs. Irregularly toothed and ranging in shape from elliptical to lanceolate, the alternate leaves grow 2 to 6 inches long.

### SIMILAR

**SPECIES:** None of the five other lobelia species in Minnesota is likely to be confused with the large, showy flowers of blue lobelia. Among them, cardinal flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*) has red flowers and a limited range along the Wisconsin border.

Developed by John Stelzner, city of Burnsville natural resources technician

