

ENVIRONMENTAL HORTICULTURE

Environmental Horticulture #EH416



LOBELIA

PRODUCTION AND CONSUMER CARE

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INTRODUCTION

- Common name: Cardinal Flower
- Scientific name: *Lobelia sp.*
- Native to the southern United States
- Plants develop stems in spring that reach 1-3' in height
- In mid-summer the terminal end of each stem becomes covered with about a foot of 1-2'' bright red flowers
- Stems and leaves have a purplish tint
- Flowers continue to develop from mid-summer to first frost
- Hardy in zones 2-9

GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

- Prefers light shade; sunnier locations are beneficial in northern climates
- Grows well in moist conditions that would rot other perennials; will even tolerate flooding
- Ordinary garden soil must be watered regularly
- Mulch generously to preserve moisture and protect roots in winter
- For peak performance, add a general purpose fertilizer once a month

PROPAGATION

- Can be propagated from seed
- Sow seeds in containers before the last frost

- Cover seeds lightly with media
- Seeds require 2-3 weeks to germinate
- Transplant seedlings outdoors after the last frost
- Can also be propagated by stem cuttings and division

DISORDERS

- Leaf spot (*Cercospora effusa*)
 - Small purplish spots appear on leaves
 - Remove infected leaves
 - Remove and destroy heavily infected plants
- Gray mold (*Botrytis*)
 - Dark gray mold grows on leaves
 - In severe cases the entire plant will decay and collapse
 - Remove infected foliage

CONSUMER CARE

- Often used along the edges ponds and waterways
- Excellent choice for a flowerbed in a low, wet area
- Attracts hummingbirds
- Excellent source of cut flowers for use in arrangements

CULTIVARS AND SPECIES

- *Lobelia*
 - ‘Ruby Slippers’: ruby-red flower spikes
- *Lobelia cardinalis*
 - ‘Queen Victoria’: red flower spikes, maroon leaves
- *Lobelia siphilitica*
 - ‘Blue’: large blue flower spikes
- *Lobelia speciosa*
 - ‘Compliment Red’: bright red flower spikes
 - ‘Fan Blue’: Intense blue-violet blooms
 - ‘Fan Scarlet’: Vivid scarlet flowers, bronze foliage

References

http://www.floridata.com/ref/L/lobe_car.cfm
http://plantsbulbs.suite101.com/article.cfm/cardinal_flower_lobelia
<http://www.gardenersnet.com/flower/lobelia.htm>

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