

Native Lobelia

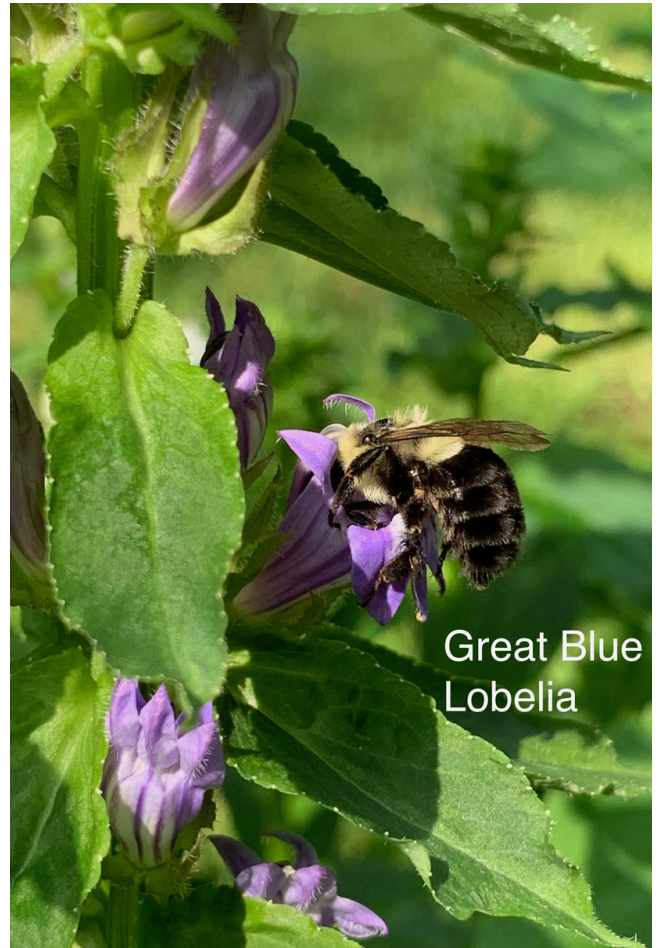
A Native Plant Gem and Hummingbird Magnet

Early European botanists first became enthralled with the cardinal flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*) when explorers sent seeds from Canada home during the 1620s. The bright red blossoms reminded them of the garments of Roman Catholic cardinals. This North American native grows from Canada to Florida through the southern plains to California. Most frequently found by streams and ponds, this short-lived perennial forms small clumps and reseeds prolifically, so the gardener will have plenty of plants to share. The basal rosettes that precede the flower spike can be transplanted spring or fall. Cardinal flowers are both rabbit and deer resistant, grow from 2-4 feet in sun to part shade, and attract hummingbirds; their bloom time even coordinates with the ruby-throated hummingbirds' southern migration. Preferring moist soil, they are a great addition to a rain garden.

Another member of the same bellflower family, the great blue lobelia (*Lobelia siphilitica*) will grow 2-4 feet, forming clumps in sun to part shade in medium to wet soil. It is native from CT to GA, and west to ND. Generally deer resistant, this great pollinator plant is attractive to sweat bees, bumble bees, and yellow-faced bees.

Both cardinal flowers and blue lobelias bloom in July-September in New Jersey and will occasionally surprise you with an offspring bearing all white flowers. Although they prefer wet conditions, they have been reported locally growing well on dry slopes in part shade.

Credit: Kathy T., Rutgers Master Gardener of Hunterdon County



Great Blue
Lobelia



Cardinal
Flower

