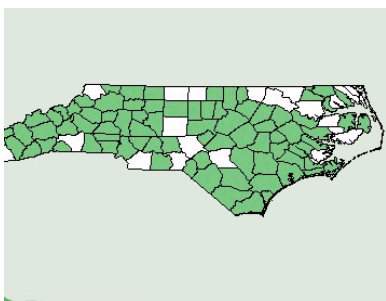


CARDINAL FLOWER

Lobelia cardinalis

Called "America's favorite" and "spectacular," its extremely showy scarlet red blossoms can be recognized at considerable distance. Hummingbirds love them.



Description: An herbaceous perennial that grows in clumps. The stems and leaves have a purplish tint. In winter it appears as a basal rosette of leaves flat on the ground. In spring it sends up one or more un-branched/branched stems with smaller leaves. By mid-summer each stem develops a terminal raceme a foot or so long of brilliant scarlet-red flowers, each with 1-2" long spikes. The blossoms are delicate, gradually opening from the bottom to top of the spikes. Bloom continues until frost.

Natural Habitat: In bogs and along stream banks

Conservation Status: Threatened in Florida, vulnerable in New York.

Size: 1-3' tall

Growth Rate: Moderate

Light: Best in partial shade but can tolerate full sun

Planting and Care: Cardinal flower requires moist soil. It can even tolerate flooding but not drought. If grown in normal garden soil, it must be watered regularly. During the winter keep leaves and debris from smothering the rosettes.

Ornamental Value: Few native plants have flowers with such intense brilliant scarlet color.

Landscape Usage: Cardinal flower is a spectacular show along the edge of a pond or water garden.

Commercial/Traditional Uses: *WARNING!* Despite the fact that Native Americans used infusions of cardinal flower to treat all sorts of afflictions the plant contains poisonous alkaloids and can cause death if ingested.

Wildlife Benefits: Cardinal flower is pollinated by the ruby-throated hummingbird. They are attracted to it in droves!