

# CARDINAL FLOWER

*Lobelia cardinalis*



Range

Cardinal flower has vivid scarlet flowers that seem to be particularly attractive to hummingbirds. This plant blooms during late summer and early fall when hummingbirds are passing through on their southerly migration. Hummingbirds are attracted to plants with red tubular flowers.



Plants

# CARDINAL FLOWER



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## Appearance

**Height:** 6 inches to 6 feet

**Flower size:** Individual flowers are 2 inches long on 8 inch spikes

**Flower color:** Intense red

Cardinal flowers produce one to several stalks that are topped by spikes of deep velvet red flowers. They form **basal rosettes** in the winter.

## Planting Information

**Soil:** Moist sand, loam, clay or limestone, poor drainage is okay

**Sunlight:** Prefers partial shade

**Spacing:** 1 foot apart

**Lifespan:** Short lived **perennials** whose size varies according to environmental conditions.

## Now You Know!

- › Cardinal flowers grow tallest and flower best in wet, partially sunny areas.
- › Cardinal flowers time their blooms with the fall migration of hummingbirds, their chief **pollinator**.
- › In the winter they die back to a circular ring of leaves called a **basal rosette**. These leaves are resistant to cold and allow the plant to continue to produce and store food.
- › These plants survive Texas' hot dry summer by living in wet shady areas.
- › Cardinal flowers are specially modified so that they can only be pollinated by hummingbirds.
- › Cardinal flowers are quite uncommon. They rely on their bright color and abundant nectar to attract hummingbirds to them. The humming-birds carry the pollen long distances from flower to flower and ensure the plant's survival.

## Life Cycle

**Plant type:** Perennial

**Bloom time:** May-October

**Method of reproduction:** Layering. Bend a stem over and partially bury it. It will produce new plants from the leaf **nodes**.

**Planting time:** Young plants should be transplanted during early spring or late fall.

## Legend Has It ...

*The scarlet-red flower was named for the red robes worn by cardinals in the Catholic Church. Although native to North America, it's been cultivated in Europe since the 1600s for its lovely flower. One legend claims that touching the root of this plant will bring love to the lives of elderly women!*

## Habitat

Uncommon along waterways throughout the state of Texas except in the Valley. It is found in wet shady areas throughout most of the U.S.

## Cardinal Flower & Man

Wildlife needs shelter, food and water to survive. Many people are helping wildlife by supplying them with the things they need. Ponds help provide water for many kinds of wildlife. The wet areas around ponds are good for moisture loving plants such as cardinal flowers, spider lilies, buttonbush and others. Wildlife use these plants for food and cover.