



Cooperative Extension Service  
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

## ***Lobelia erinus***<sup>1</sup>

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### **Introduction**

Lobelias are small plants, 3 to 10 inches tall, which are covered with the most vivid blue flowers imaginable, from early summer until frost (Fig. 1). Lobelias have either very compact growth, quite suitable to edgings or mass plantings, or long trailing stems, which will gently tumble over the edges of a container or raised bed, providing a bold splash of color wherever used. Cultivars are available with flowers of blue, violet, pink, white, or purple, often with a contrasting white or yellow eye.

### **General Information**

**Scientific name:** *Lobelia erinus*

**Pronunciation:** loe-BEEL-lee-uh air-RYE-nuss

**Common name(s):** Lobelia

**Family:** *Labeliaceae*

**Plant type:** annual

**USDA hardiness zones:** all zones (Fig. 2)

**Planting month for zone 7:** May

**Planting month for zone 8:** Apr

**Planting month for zone 9:** Mar; Sep; Oct

**Planting month for zone 10 and 11:** Feb; Oct; Nov; Dec

**Origin:** not native to North America

**Uses:** container or above-ground planter; mass planting; border; attracts butterflies; cascading down a wall

**Availability:** grown in small quantities by a small number of nurseries

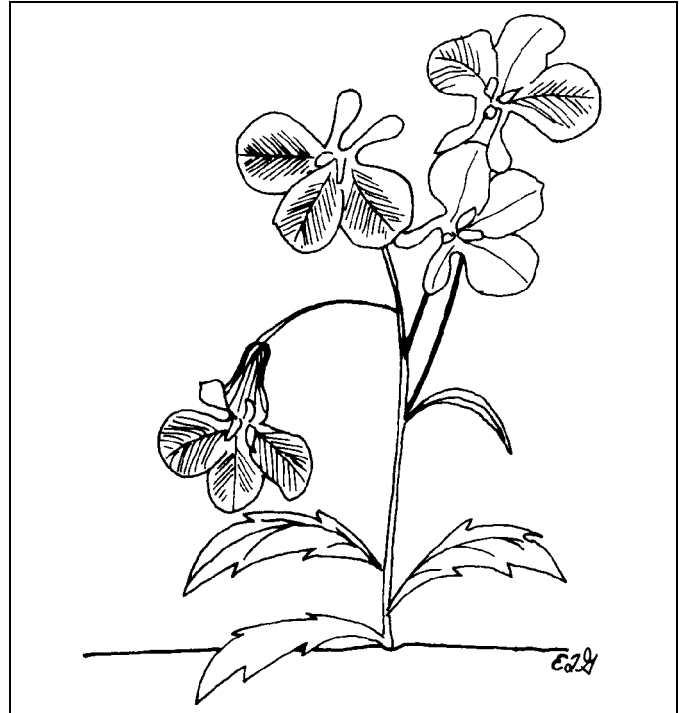


Figure 1. Lobelia.

### **Description**

**Height:** 0 to 1 feet

**Spread:** 1 to 2 feet

**Plant habit:** spreading

**Plant density:** dense

**Growth rate:** fast

**Texture:** medium

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

### Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate  
**Leaf type:** simple  
**Leaf margin:** crenate  
**Leaf shape:** linear; obovate  
**Leaf venation:** not applicable  
**Leaf type and persistence:** not applicable  
**Leaf blade length:** less than 2 inches  
**Leaf color:** green  
**Fall color:** not applicable  
**Fall characteristic:** not applicable

### Flower

**Flower color:** white; blue; pink; purple, violet  
**Flower characteristic:** showy

### Fruit

**Fruit shape:** no fruit  
**Fruit length:** no fruit  
**Fruit cover:** no fruit  
**Fruit color:** not applicable  
**Fruit characteristic:** inconspicuous and not showy

### Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/bark/branches:** not applicable  
**Current year stem/twig color:** green  
**Current year stem/twig thickness:** medium

### Culture

**Light requirement:** plant grows in full sun  
**Soil tolerances:** occasionally wet; clay; sand; acidic; loam  
**Drought tolerance:**  
**Soil salt tolerances:** unknown  
**Plant spacing:** 6 to 12 inches

### Other

**Roots:** not applicable  
**Winter interest:** not applicable  
**Outstanding plant:** not particularly outstanding  
**Invasive potential:** not known to be invasive  
**Pest resistance:** long-term health usually not affected by pests

## Use and Management

Lobelia performs best in cool weather but is sensitive to frost. In warmer regions, Lobelia should be planted in partial shade but can grow in full sun where summers are cool or hazy. Although lobelia will cease flowering when temperatures are too warm, they will quickly recover when temperatures drop in early fall. Provided with rich, fertile, well-drained soil and abundant moisture, lobelia is very easy to grow and quite a spectacular little plant.

Many cultivars are available: 'Blue Moon' has dark blue flowers; 'Cambridge Blue' has clear, soft blue flowers on compact, upright 4 to 6-inch plants; 'Crystal Palace', bronze green leaves, dark blue flowers on compact plants; 'Paper Moon' has white flowers; 'Rosamunde', carmine red flowers with a white eye; 'White Lady' and 'Snowball', pure white flowers; 'Blue Cascade', 'Fountain' series, 'Hamburgia', and 'Sapphire' have trailing forms, suitable for hanging baskets or raised planters. 'Sapphire' has purple flowers with a white eye and is one of the best trailing lobelias.

Plants should be cut back after each flush of flowering to encourage new blossoms.

Propagation is by seed which germinates readily, with blooms appearing in four months.

No pests are of major concern.

### **Pests and Diseases**

Damping-off, stem rot, root rot, if conditions are too damp.