

LOOK AGAIN !

Lobelia is an extensive genus that is well represented in the tropics, where some species attain enormous stature. Ours are of modest size, however, and the two largest species (and perhaps the most familiar) have individual flowers less than $1\frac{1}{2}$ " long. They are Great Blue Lobelia (L. siphilitica), with prominently striped dark blue corollas, and the brilliant scarlet Cardinal Flower (L. cardinalis).



LOBELIA PUBERULA

Of the others, one of the loveliest is Downy Lobelia (L. puberula), a widespread species characterized by numerous light blue flowers $\frac{1}{2}$ " to $\frac{3}{4}$ " long arranged in a distinctively one-sided (secund) raceme. According to the literature, it typically is invested with minute erect, soft hairs (as the names would indicate), and has a calyx with lanceolate lobes.

Some plants found in our area fail to conform in all respects, but display some of the features that usually are ascribed to L. amoena. In this the stem is more likely to be glabrous, and the sepals are narrower--even linear--and sometimes bear callous-tipped teeth. In addition, plants are often seen with flowers of a deeper shade of blue than that which we customarily associate with L. puberula.

Since L. amoena has a much more restricted distribution, it is always gratifying to find a specimen that keys out with relative certainty. Unfortunately, though, the two species tend to intergrade, and then the distinctions between them become less clear. But even when our attempts at positive identification are frustrated, we can take satisfaction from the fact that the exercise itself has added just a little more to our intimate knowledge of the wildflowers around us.

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