

CARDINAL FLOWER

Lobelia cardinalis var. *cardinalis* L.

Synonyms: *Lobelia cardinalis* L.

Family: Campanulaceae (bellflower)

FNAI Ranks: G5TNR/S4

Legal Status: US-none; FL-none



Flowers bright red. Floodplain swamp at Lafayette Forest Wildlife and Environmental Area. Photo by Kelly Anderson.

Field Description: Perennial **herb** up to 1 - 1.8 m tall. **Corolla** bright red (faded in dried specimens) or very rarely white, 30 - 45 mm long; **anther tubes** (4.0-) 4.5 - 5.5 mm long; **filament tubes** (24-) 28 - 30 (-33) mm long; lower stem **leaves** petiolate; leaf blades mostly 3 - 5 times as long as wide, usually coarsely toothed.

Similar Species: The bright red flowers of this species are unmistakable.

Related Rare Species: Boykin's lobelia (*Lobelia boykinii*) has blue or purple flowers and filiform stem leaves that are less than 5 mm wide.

Habitat: Streambanks, hydric hammocks, spring runs and swamps; often in standing water.

cardinal flower

Lobelia cardinalis var. *cardinalis*

Best Survey Season: Summer-fall; (May-) July - October.

Range-wide Distribution: NB, QC, ON, MN, CO, UT, and southern CA south to central peninsular FL, TX, and south through Mexico and Central America to Colombia.

Conservation Status: Listed state-threatened, this species is found throughout the Panhandle south to central Florida, mainly being threatened by changes to hydrology within its habitat.

Protection and Management: Protect habitats from hydrology manipulation and forestry practices in hammocks and swamps.

References: Weakley, A. S. and the Southeastern Flora Team 2024, Wunderlin and Hansen 2011.



Flowers bilaterally symmetrical. Hydric hammock at Aucilla Wildlife Management Area. Photo by Kelly Anderson.

cardinal flower

Lobelia cardinalis var. *cardinalis*



Growing in hydric hammock at Aucilla Wildlife Management Area. Photo by Kelly Anderson.



Growing along riverbank at Joe Budd Wildlife Management Area. Photo by Kelly Anderson.