



### *Lobelia cardinalis* cardinal flower

#### Why Observe?

Cardinal flower is a bright-red, showy wildflower native to 41 states in the U.S. Hummingbirds, bees, and butterflies are attracted to the plant's nectar. Cardinal flower is toxic to humans and pets when consumed, so be cautious if you're observing with any pets or small children. This plant tends to bloom between July and September.



[analogdan via iNaturalist.org](#). CC BY-NC 4.0 (cropped)

#### Tips for Identification

The flowers are small, tubular and bloom on opposite sides of unbranched stalks. The leaves are finely toothed, lance-shaped, and around 4 inches long. This plant typically grows 2-4 feet tall.



[kimcwren via iNaturalist.org](#). CC BY-NC 4.0 (cropped)

Be aware there is variation from individual to individual within a species, so your plant may not look exactly like the one pictured. If you are uncertain whether or not a phenophase is occurring, report a "?" for its status until it becomes clear what you are observing after subsequent visits.

***Lobelia cardinalis***  
cardinal flower

**Image Needed**

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**Initial growth**

New growth of the plant is visible after a period of no growth (winter or drought), either from above-ground buds with green tips, or new green or white shoots breaking through the soil surface. Growth is considered "initial" on each bud or shoot until the first leaf has fully unfolded. For seedlings, "initial" growth includes the presence of the one or two small, round or elongated leaves (cotyledons) before the first true leaf has unfolded.



[Fred Melgert / Carla Hoegen via iNaturalist.org. CC BY-NC 4.0 \(cropped\).](#)

**Leaves**

One or more live, fully unfolded leaves are visible on the plant. For seedlings, consider only true leaves and do not count the one or two small, round or elongated leaves (cotyledons) that are found on the stem almost immediately after the seedling germinates. Do not include fully dried or dead leaves.

**Flowers or flower buds**

One or more fresh open or unopened flowers or flower buds are visible on the plant. Include flower buds or inflorescences that are swelling or expanding, but do not include those that are tightly closed and not actively growing (dormant). Also do not include wilted or dried flowers.



[Lottery Discountz via iNaturalist.org. CC0](#)



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**Open flowers**

One or more open, fresh flowers are visible on the plant. Flowers are considered "open" when the reproductive parts (male stamens or female pistils) are visible between or within unfolded or open flower parts (petals, floral tubes or sepals). Do not include wilted or dried flowers.

**Fruits**

One or more fruits are visible on the plant. For *Lobelia cardinalis*, the fruit is a small capsule that changes from green to tan, light brown or red-brown and splits open to expose the seeds. Do not include empty capsules that have already dropped all of their seeds.



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[Douglas Goldman via iNaturalist.org. CC BY-NC 4.0 \(cropped\).](#)

**Ripe fruits**

One or more ripe fruits are visible on the plant. For *Lobelia cardinalis*, a fruit is considered ripe when it has turned tan, light brown or red-brown and has split open to expose the seeds. Do not include empty capsules that have already dropped all of their seeds.

**Phenophases not pictured:** Recent fruit or seed drop