

# Bay lobelia

(*Lobelia feayana*)

For definitions of botanical terms, visit [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary\\_of\\_botanical\\_terms](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary_of_botanical_terms).

Bay lobelia is a dainty endemic perennial commonly seen on moist roadsides. It typically blooms in January through early spring, but can bloom year-round. The plant occurs naturally in moist habitats, particularly roadside ditches and depressions where, en mass, it appears as a brilliant blue haze. Bees are its primary pollinator.

Bay lobelia flowers are small (1/4- to 1/2-inch long) and vary in color from bluish to lavender to purplish-pink. They are five-petaled: the upper two petals are thin, upright and often reflexed, while the three lower petals are fused to form a lip-like structure. The “lip” base is distinctly white. Basal leaves are small, ovate and petiolate with minutely scalloped margins. Seeds are born in inconspicuous capsules.

The genus *Lobelia* is named for Matthias de Lobel (1538-1616), a Flemish physician, botanist and author of a landmark botany textbook.

Bay lobelia is often confused with Canadian or Blue toadflax (*Linaria canadensis*), another diminutive wildflower commonly seen en mass along roadsides and with a similar color and flower form.

**Family:** Campanulaceae (Bellflower family)

**Native range:** Taylor, Madison and most peninsular counties

To see where natural populations of Bay lobelia have been vouchered, visit [www.florida.plantatlas.usf.edu](http://www.florida.plantatlas.usf.edu).

**Hardiness:** Zones 8–10

**Soil:** Moist, well-drained soils

**Exposure:** Full sun to light shade

**Growth habit:** 6–12”+ tall, spreading via underground rhizomes

**Propagation:** Seed, cuttings, division

**Garden tips:** Bay lobelia is not typically propagated by nurseries, so your best bet is to collect seed or plant material from someone who is growing it in their landscape (with permission, of course). It is best for naturalistic landscapes and restorations. Its low height and sprawling tendency make it suitable for a groundcover in large, moist areas.



Photo by Mary Keim