

White lobelia

(*Lobelia paludosa*)

For definitions of botanical terms, visit en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary_of_botanical_terms.

White lobelia is a winsome, wet-loving wildflower found in swamps and wet flatwoods throughout much of Florida. It primarily blooms in spring and summer, but may bloom year-round, especially in South Florida. The flowers attract bees and butterflies.

Flowers are white with a tinge of pale purple or blue. They are two-lipped — the upper lip has two fused petals and is reflexed; the lower lip has three fused petals. The entire corolla is fused at the base, forming a tube. Flowers are borne in terminal racemes. Sepals are narrow with toothed, reddish-purple margins. Basal leaves are long (between 2 and 6 inches), narrowly lanceolate to elliptic, and sessile. Leaf margins may be entire or toothed. Leaf arrangement is alternate. Stem leaves are reduced or absent. Seeds are borne 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. The species epithet *paludosa* is from the Latin paludosus, meaning boggy, swampy or marshy.

Family: Campanulaceae (Bellflower family)

Native range: Nearly throughout

To see where natural populations of *White lobelia* have been vouchered, visit www.florida.plantatlas.usf.edu.

Hardiness: Zones 8A–10B

Lifespan: Perennial

Soil: Moist to wet, well- to poorly drained, sandy or calcareous soils

Exposure: Full sun

Growth habit: 1–3' tall

Propagation: Seed

Garden tips: White lobelia is best suited for moist to wet wildflower gardens, naturalistic landscapes and habitat restorations. It will die back in the winter and may require annual pruning of old flowering stems. It does not tolerate salt or drought.

White lobelia is generally not commercially available. Visit its natural habitat to see it.



Photo by EBob Peterson