

Bay lobelia

(*Lobelia feayana*)

For definitions of botanical terms, visit 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 masse, 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 masse 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.

Lifespan: Perennial

Soil: Moist, well-drained soils

Exposure: Full sun to light shade

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

Bay lobelia is not commercially available. Visit a natural area to see it.



Photo by Emily Bell

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