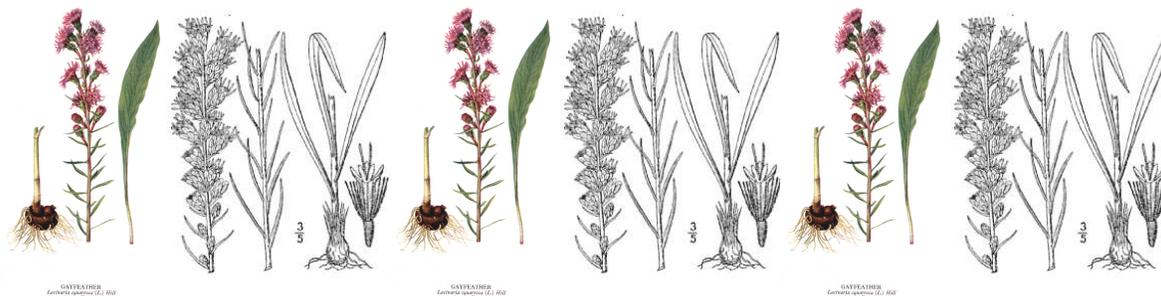


Blazing Star - *Liatris*

In the world's audience hall, the simple blade of grass sits on the same carpet with the sunbeams, and the stars of midnight.
~Rabindranath Tagore



What's in a name:

Liatris spp.

Other common names: Fairy Wand; Gay feather; Devil's Bit; Rattlesnake Master; Colic root; Button Snakeroot; Devil's Bite; Throatwort; Prairie Pine.

An unrelated plant in the Lily Family, *Chamelirium*, is also called Blazing Star

All in the family: Aster Family

One would be hard pressed to find a more lovely native perennial for their butterfly gardens than *Liatris*.

I would rather be a superb meteor, every atom of me in magnificent glow, than a sleepy and permanent planet. - Jack London

In case you needed another resin to plant it: *Liatris* leaves are alternate, narrow, and grass-like with resin dots.

Spike Lee-atris: The inflorescence has entire groupings of florets attached to central stem and it flowers from the top down. It somewhat resembles a thin purple bottlebrush.

Caterpillar Café:
Glorious flower moth
Schinia gloriosa



1998 NC Wildflower of the Year

 You light up my spike [with apologies to Debbie Boone]: In John Bartram's (1751) *Medicinal Britannica*, *Liatris* was used for treatment of sore throat.

It would make your liver quiver: Due to possible liver damage and its resulting reduction of blood clotting ability, it was banned from use in flavorings due to the harmful, aromatic coumarins. A compound called liatrin is being investigated for possible anti-cancer properties however.

Don't feel obligated: *Liatris* is an obligate out-breeder so it cannot self-pollinate. This is fancy botanical lingo for a plant rejecting its own pollen in order to accept another plant's pollen – thus resulting in a stronger genetic line for seed.

Nectar for the little mouths on the prairie: Chief pollinators are long-tongued insects, butterflies, bumblebees and bee flies.

It has a general resemblance to thistles and knapweed but is a handsomer plant than any of them.
– Henry David Thoreau

Floral fairy wands: Popular cultivars and hybrids are used widely in the florist trade. It would not be unusual for a stem of this ultra-violet flower to show up in a Mother's Day bouquet in May or a Teleflora's Thanksgiving vase in November.

 Catch a blazing star and put it in your pocket:

Blazing star was added to the feed mixtures (with shelled corn) to improve the general health of horses.

Go Voles! The wintertime food caches of voles and moles usually contain *Liatris* corms. If it survives the woodland critters, as a perennial, it may live 20 or more years.

 Strong, strong on the range: The deep corm allows the food storage of this wildflower to survive grassland wildfires. It is said to have a carrot-like flavor.

One may have a blazing hearth in one's soul and yet no one ever comes to sit by it.
– Vincent van Gogh