Heaven is under our feet as well as over our heads.  

- Henry David Thoreau

**What's in a name:**

*Lobelia cardinalis*

Cardinal Flower; Highbelia; Queen of the Meadow; Slinkweed; Hog Physic

*Aall in the Family: Bellflower (Campanulaceae)*

87 genera; 1950 species

**Relatives:** Harebells, Venus Looking Glass

*Common names in Mexico:*

Acaxóchitl, Cardana de lagua, Lobelia, Sangre de Cristo. Pastorcillo, Diente de Drudio; pipilosuchilo; zarcilla; Cardenal de la laguna, cardenal de maceta y lobelia; pipilosuchilo; zarcillo; diente de chucho; chilpamxochitl

In addition to *Lobelia cardinalis* growing in the monarch overwintering reserves, there are also *Lobelia gruina*; *L. laxiflora*; *L. nana* and *L. plebeia*

**NC Wildflower of the Year in 1982, 1983 and 2001**

*Fame! I'm gonna live forever:* Named for Dr. Mathias de Lobel (1538-1616), a Flemish botanist and physician to King James I – yes, of the King James Bible fame.

*Lobel Peace Prize:* The Shakers were among the first to package the *Lobelia* herbs for sales abroad. Its primary use was for the alkaloid lobeline due to its similarity to nicotine in stop-smoking aids.

*You make me feel like throwing up:* Ay, there's the rub – as an emetic it induces vomiting and affects the central nervous system.

*Lo-Belias will keep us together:* In the early 1800's, herbalist Samuel Thompson promoted the use of *Lobelia* and cayenne pepper as a medicinal aid.

**Cardinal directions:** Medicine men used its dried and powdered roots in ceremony to dispel storms. They also placed them upon graves to perhaps quiet the spirits of the dead and give them rest.

**Whatever inspired the cardinal name:** It may have been named for the color of robes or the color and shape of the funny hats (miters) worn by Roman Catholic cardinals. Perhaps it suggested the color of the Northern Cardinal bird which is a North American finch with a crested head.

**Cardinal Rule at the Nectar Amusement Park:**

Your tongue must be “___” this long to sip here! ☺

**Perish the thought:** The loss of wetlands and wet meadow flora may lead to the loss of hummers.

**Cardinal sin flower:** Cardinal Flower's cousin, the Great Blue Lobelia was exploited with claims of treatment for syphilis as well as anti-smoking compounds. So widely spread was its reputation that its scientific name is *Lobelia syphilitica*. In 1993, it was NC Wildflower of the Year.

The easy cultivation from seed of this peerless wildflower - and it is offered in many trade catalogues - might save it to those regions in Nature's wide garden that now know it no more. The ranks of floral missionaries need recruits.

- Mrs. Neltje Blanchan, 1900

For range maps, see: [http://plants.usda.gov/core/profile?symbol=LOCA2](http://plants.usda.gov/core/profile?symbol=LOCA2)

**Photo by Jennifer Rhea Serres**

Companion planting with Sneezeweed (Helenium) and Black eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia*)

**source:** [http://etc.usf.edu/clipart/](http://etc.usf.edu/clipart/)

**Photo by Jennifer Rhea Serres**

**Raiders of the deep nectaries:** Small bees find slits in upper corolla and “steal” nectar without helping to pollinate the flower. The nectary is out of reach for most insects.

**Amazing Technicolor Deep Throat:** Hummingbird bills fit nicely into the floral tube as their tongues extend to reach the nectar at the base of the tube. Stamens discharge pollen on the inside of tube so the hummer's head gets dusted with pollen grains.

Pollen is released before the pistil matures and becomes receptive to pollen thus cross pollination occurs instead of self-pollination.

**Plants for the Lady in Red:** Henrietta Maria, the wife of protestant King Charles I, “laughed excessively” upon seeing the imported plant as it reminded her of the scarlet stockings of the Cardinal. Glad history recorded such important events...

A tribute to my all-time favorite botanist

Dr. C. Ritchie Bell for teaching me the cardinal rule of botany: Stop. Look. Listen.

And enjoy the awe-some beauty and the wonder of the flowers.