**Lobelia cardinalis**  
**Cardinal Flower**

This lovely wildflower, a hummingbird favorite, shines with brilliant scarlet flowers. Its natural habitat is the floodplain forests, freshwater marshes, and wet meadows throughout the Mid-Atlantic Region. The Virginia Native Plant Society honored Cardinal Flower as Wildflower of the Year in 1991.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Perennial</th>
<th>With Hummer, Close-up, Clumps, Rosettes</th>
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<tr>
<td>Height: 2–4 feet</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spread: 1–2 feet</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bloom Color: Red</td>
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**Characteristics**
- Thick, rigid, and erect leafy stems in clumps
- Dark green lance-shaped leaves
- Showy red flowers, with 3 lower and 2 upper petals joined into a tube, bloom in 8-inch terminal spikes from July to October

**Attributes**
- Tolerates wet soil and rabbits; no serious pests or diseases; deer seldom severely damage except for young plants
- Short-lived so allow plants to self-seed
- All parts are poisonous if eaten by humans; may cause contact dermatitis in some individuals
- Attracts hummers (like the female ruby-throated hummingbird pictured), songbirds, and butterflies

**Growing and Maintenance Tips**
- Soil Requirements: Humus-rich soil
- Light Requirements: Sun, Partial Shade
- Water Requirements: Moist, Wet
- Partial shade preferred in warmer climates; requires constant moisture
- Divide clumps in spring or fall; do not cover basal rosettes with leaves or mulch in winter
- Use in butterfly, hummingbird, rain or woodland gardens or near fresh water’s edge
- Hardiness: USDA Zones 3–9

**Excellent Replacement for**
- Canna cultivars
- Crocosmia
- Gladiolus - Gladiola
- Lychnis chalcedonica - Maltese Cross
- Lythrum salicaria - Purple Loosestrife
- Pentas lanceolata - Egyptian Star Flower (annual)

Images by Bill Buchanan (top), John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge at Tinicum, by Mary Free (middle), Shade Garden, and by Elaine Mills (bottom), U.S. National Arboretum