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**Wildflower Spot – September 2010**  
John Clayton Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

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## DOWNY LOBELIA

*Lobelia puberula*

*Campanulaceae, Bellflower Family*

By Helen Hamilton, *President of the John Clayton Chapter, VNPS*

A pretty little perennial plant growing 1-3 feet in height, Downy Lobelia is a member of the Bellflower Family, and related to Red and Blue Cardinal Flowers. The flowers are typical of the cardinal flowers with 5 petals fused into a tube. The three lower petal lobes project downward with the upper two petals curled upward. The violet-blue flowers are  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch long with a white center, arranged in a spike, usually one-sided. Stems and leaves are softly hairy.

Downy Lobelia is found mostly along the coastal plain from New Jersey southward to Florida and westward to Illinois and Texas, and in most of the eastern and piedmont counties of Virginia. The plant prefers wet soil, in open woods and clearings, in sun or shade. The blooms appear August through October.

The species name comes from the Latin “*puber*” meaning “downy” and refers to the hairs on the plant. ❖



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**Photo:** Downy lobelia (*Lobelia puberula*) taken by Helen Hamilton  
For more information about native plants visit [www.vnps.org](http://www.vnps.org).