

BLUE TOADFLAX

Nuttallanthus (Linaria) canadensis

By Helen Hamilton, *Past-president of the John Clayton Chapter, VNPS*

While the flowers are small and the stems slender, Blue Toadflax grows in conspicuous profusion in early spring. It is easy to identify with its 2-lipped, spurred, light blue-violet flowers in an elongated cluster. The flowers are about 1/2" long; upper lip is 2-lobed, lower lip 3-lobed with 2 small white ridges. A long, thread-like spur at the base projects backward and downward. From a basal rosette of prostrate leafy stems, erect flowering stems grow to 2 feet tall. Stem leaves are long, thin and wispy, usually alternate. Many sandy roadsides have a haze of blue from Blue Toadflax colonies in bloom.

This perennial grows in full sun or partial shade in open, dry sites and abandoned fields, which are usually sandy. The plant is found in eastern and central counties of Virginia, and ranges from Massachusetts to Minnesota, south to Florida and Mexico and on the Pacific Coast. Blooms March-May.

The leaves resemble those of flax, which accounts for the common name. The older genus name is from the Latin *linum*, for "flax."

