

About the Lupin Flower

The word lupin (lupine, the common American spelling) is derived from the Late root "legere" Meaning to gather. These native wildflowers have the unearned reputation of being difficult to propagate. Nothing could be further from the truth. They can colonize entire fields by dropping their ripened seed in the autumn. The seed has a very tough coat that must be cracked before germination can take place. This occurs naturally after a winter of cold and frost. The waves of purple, pink and white lupine found in our White Mountain meadows and old pastures are quite likely crossed between the native species, *Lupinus perennis*, and escaped garden cultivars.

Resist the temptation to dig a mature plant to start your own field of lupine because they possess a deep taproot and resent transplanting. The popular Russell Hybrids, commonly grown in English gardens and American flower borders, are available in nurseries and from seed catalogues. To start from seed, sow directly in the ground in the late fall and germination will occur the following spring. Lupine will flower the second year. If planting in the spring - nick the seed coat with a sharp knife, soak the seed overnight, and then plant in a flat. Keep the soil moist until seedlings emerge. Lupine prefer cooler summers and will thrive in any well-drained garden soil with at least one half day of sun.

There are many other wild species of lupine distributed throughout the USA, Mexico and Europe. The most famous in the American West is the Texas Bluebonnet and in Southern Europe a species call the "Wolf Bean" was grown as a forage and green manure crop. Some species have been grown for human consumption, however this plant does have the reputation of being poisonous. The lupine is a member of the Leguminosae (peas and beans) family, which is a beneficial nitrogen fixer for the soil.

This beautiful flower has also found its place in literature. Miss Rumphius, a classic children's book written and illustrated in 1982 by Barbara Cooney, is a charming story with a very relevant environmental message. After a long, successful and happy life, Miss Rumphius recalls how her beloved grandfather, an artist, once told her that she must do something to make the world a more beautiful place. She buys bushels of seeds and sows wild lupine wherever she walks. The "Lupine Lady", as she becomes known, leaves a legacy of natural beauty for many to delight in for years to come.

As you enjoy the wild fields of lupine in these wondrous mountains, we hope the spirit of Miss Rumphius walks with you. Since this year's flowers will go to seed and make next year's plants, we kindly ask that you refrain from picking the flowers, but accept our heartfelt invitation to return and experience them again next year!

In Bloom Early June to Mid June

This map indicates some Lupine areas. Explore our back roads and by-ways to discover many more.

