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Thursday, May 1, 2025



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How to Grow Lupines: The Complete Lupine Flower Guide



Botanical Name:
Lupinus spp.

Plant Family:
Fabaceae

FREE GUIDE!



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Planting, Growing, and Caring for Lupines

By [Catherine Boeckmann](#)

Last Updated: April 3, 2025



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Lupines, with their colorful flower spikes, are planted in spring or fall. Also called bluebonnets, lupines not only attract butterflies and pollinators but also are deer-resistant and low-maintenance! See how to grow and care for lupines.

All About Lupine

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Lupinus includes hundreds of species, many native to North America! You'll see them both in the wild and in gardens—from California to Maine. This hardy perennial blooms in late spring (April to June) and is a great addition to a low-maintenance meadowscape or cottage-style garden. Lupines were once thought to steal nutrients from the soil—hence their genus name, *Lupinus*, which is Latin for “wolf.” However, lupines are in the pea family and, as nitrogen-fixers, can actually improve the soil.

upright spikes varied in color from deep blue to purple shades. Growing 1 to 4 feet tall, the leaves of lupine are also beautiful with grey-green palmate foliage with silvery hairs. The seed pod looks like a hairy pea pod and contains up to 12 seeds. In fact, lupines are a legume, which means that they fix nitrogen in the soil and they enrich your soil health.

Note: Not all lupines are perennials; the potted plants are typically perennial cultivars, but other lupines are annuals.

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- [20 Easy-to-Grow Perennial Flowers for Beginners](#)
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- [How to Grow Columbines: The Complete Columbine Flower Guide](#)

PLANTING

Lupines prefer full sun; they'll grow in light shade but won't flower as profusely. They also prefer sandy, well-drained soil and can't survive waterlogged conditions. Also, they can not tolerate heavy soils so be sure to loosen the soil up before planting.

When to Plant Lupines

- Plant in cool temperatures; lupine can not tolerate heat, humidity, or drought.
- Lupine seeds are sown in early spring or in the fall. Many gardeners prefer to plant in fall to enjoy them mid-spring.
- If starting seedlings indoors, you can transplant them when they are about 4 to 6 weeks old. At this age, they haven't developed the long tap root and will have a better chance to survive.

How to Plant Lupines

loosen to a depth of about 1 to 1-1/2 foot; amend with organic matter and grit for good drainage.

- Before planting, soak seeds in a bowl of warm water for 24 to 48 hours to soften the tough seed coat, and then you can “scarify” the seeds to allow moisture to reach the seed; this means roughening the seeds between two sheets of sandpaper before planting. Scarifying the seeds greatly improves the odds of germination.
- To sow seeds, dig a hole 1/2 inch deeper than the seedling pot and twice as wide. Space seedlings for smaller varieties about 1 foot apart and larger varieties about 2 to 3 feet apart.
- Tamp down the seeds, ensuring good soil contact. Water, and if the weather is dry, water lightly until germination, which can take up to 10 days.



Photo: Alex Damansky

GROWING

- Avoid fertilizing; if necessary, apply an acidifying agent to maintain slightly acidic pH in the soil.
- Taller varieties may need staking.
- Cut off faded flowers to promote more blooms.
- Save the seeds when the pods turn yellow.
- Don't cut dead spikes in the fall, wait until spring.
- Harvest and save seeds then the pods turn yellow and seeds rattle inside.
- Add mulch around the plants to keep the roots cool (and for winter protection).

the plant, as it could introduce rot.

Types

There are over 200 wild species of lupine, and most are North American natives. These usually have blue, white, or yellow flowers.

Garden lupine (*Lupinus polyphyllus*), aka big-leaved lupine: blue, pink, and purple flowers; native to much of western North America; prefers moist environments.

Wild Lupine (*Lupinus perennis*) is a blue perennial plant that grows in the eastern half of North America.

Texas Bluebonnet (*L. texensis*) is an annual plant with dark blue flowers with white markings that cover fields and roadsides in Texas every April.

Russell hybrid lupines (*L. polyphyllus*)

also called garden lupines have been

it can take a year to begin its abundant blooms.

The Russell Lupine Mix seeds are easy to grow and the tall flowers bloom in a variety of colors.

Lupine Woodfield Hybrids are perennial plants that come in deeper shades and beautiful bi-colored blooms.

Dwarf hybrids ‘Dwarf Lulu’ and ‘Minarette’ grow only to 1 ½ to 2 feet tall. Excellent for small gardens, containers, or the front of beds and borders. Plants grow to 20 inches tall. Winter hardy to zone 4.

GARDENING PRODUCTS

PESTS/DISEASES

Lupine is deer-resistant.

spots, fungal; mildew, downy; mildew,
powdery; rot, Phytophthora crown and
root; rot, Rhizoctonia root and stem;
rust; viruses; wilt, Fusarium.

Pests: aphids; slugs/snails; thrips.

WIT AND WISDOM

- Lupines are nitrogen-fixing and can improve your soil!
- Many species of lupine are poisonous to livestock.
- Lupines are deer-resistant.
- The lupine flowers are not edible, but the seeds are. The nut-like seeds were once a favorite food for traveling troops in ancient Europe.
- Lupine seeds can be ground into flour. In Europe this flour is used in baking.

FLOWERS

Catherine Boeckmann



Catherine Boeckmann loves nature, stargazing, and gardening so it's not surprising that she and The Old Farmer's Almanac found each other. She leads digital content for the Almanac website, and is also a certified master gardener in the state of Indiana. [Read More from Catherine Boeckmann](#)

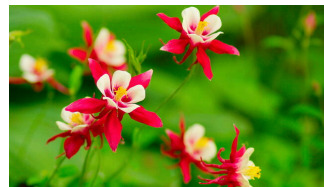
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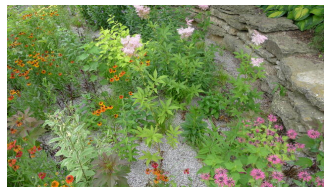
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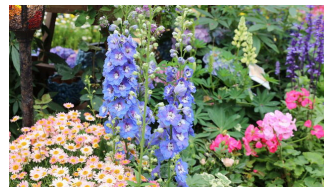
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The logo is a circular emblem with a gold border. Inside the circle, there is a vibrant illustration of various garden produce including carrots, tomatoes, green beans, and a purple eggplant, all set against a background of green leaves and a bright sunburst at the top. The words "THE OLD FARMER'S ALMANAC" are written in a gold, serif font along the top inner edge of the circle, and "GARDENING CLUB" is written along the bottom inner edge.

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COMMENTS

ADD A COMMENT

Lynn (not verified) 10 months 2 weeks ago

After the Lupins have finished blooming,
can I transplant to another garden without
the plant dying??

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REPLY

Debi (not verified) 11 months 1 week ago

I bought a flowering lupine but it fell and
top broke how can I care for it

REPLY

Jab (not verified) 11 months 2 weeks ago

Just bought a lupine plant. Can I pot it in a
large container

[REPLY](#)

Denise T (not verified) 1 year 5 months ago

What am I missing? I'm just a little confused, how do you soak the seeds in WARM water for 1 to 2 days? The water will cool down after a few minutes unless there's some sort of heat source, won't it?

[REPLY](#)

The Editors 1 year 5 months ago

Hi Denise,

You want to start soaking lupine seeds in warm water. The key is to make sure you are not starting with cold water. The water will cool down over the soaking time, so keep it in a location that is warm. If you feel that the water

can certainly freshen with warm water during the soaking time.

REPLY

tom chase (not verified) 1 year 10 months ago

In VT after the Lupine have gone to seed along the roadways, I collect the seeds take them to my fields and scatter mimicking what goes on naturally. Some tale, many don't. In several places I didn't scatter, suddenly the plant grows. Must have been either bird or animal was the culprit doing natures thing. Trying to plant the seeds hasn't worked well. Mother Nature to the rescue. In Northern VT Newark, they grow wild greatly. Family has a field full of them. Seeds get scattered by the mowing of the fields. Didn't know the seeds were eatable.

REPLY

During the spring bloom Lupines grow along the roads and stretch for many miles along Hwy 28 and junction with Hwy 2 in Michigan's Upper Peninsula and well into Wisconsin following the Lake Superior shore to Minnesota. The drive is a pleasure and the Lupine bloom makes it worth planning travel ahead and bring your camera.

REPLY

Adria (not verified) 1 year 10 months ago

I my lupin seeds germinated after 6 days and I didn't soak them or fiddle with sand paper.

Seems like a bizarre piece of advice not sure if originates from ancient times and no one ever questioned its validity.

Lupins self seed naturally and seeds need no help from a sand paper ! I suggest you

[REPLY](#)**Richard Cronk (not verified)** 1

year 2 months ago

In self-seeding Lupines the seed spends fall and winter on the ground. That usually includes a few feet of snow for 4 months in northern lower Michigan. I collect and save seeds properly and with care. A little soak to get the winter off is light duty compared to the wild thing.

[REPLY](#)**Sally Kehoe (not verified)** 1

year 10 months ago

Actually it is not silly at all.

Stratification and scarification are recommended for many plant seeds since those processes

REPLY

MORE COMMENTS

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