



American Columbo

Frasera caroliniensis
(L.) Schott

The American columbo, *Frasera caroliniensis* is an unusual plant in the gentian family. It forms a basal rosette of large leaves, somewhat resembling mullein, but it grows in that form for years. It may grow anywhere from five to thirty years before flowering, although 7-15 years is the usual interval. When it flowers, it sends up a vertical stalk, usually about five feet, but it can be as high as seven feet, and bears many small white flowers that are intriguing on close inspection. Although the blooming periods are rare, the flowers are a favorite of honeybees. When it does flower, all the plants in a region will bloom simultaneously. The

plants die after flowering and seeding. It was formerly known as *Swertia caroliniensis*. This species is native to the midwestern United States, in a trapezoidal area with corners approximately in westernmost New York state, northwestern South Carolina, southeasternmost Oklahoma, and west-central Michigan. It is hardy through zone 4.

Cultivation

American columbo naturally tends to live in soils over calcareous bedrock (limestone, etc.), but can grow in almost any garden soil. It has a deep taproot, and is fairly drought-resistant. It can grow in full sun, but prefers partial shade.

Propagation

American columbo seed **MUST** be cold-stratified. This can be accomplished by direct sowing of the seed in fall or early winter, or by cold storage in a moist medium. If the latter method is used, allow 60 days of stratification. A normal refrigerator provides a suitable environment for cold stratification..

Conservation Seed
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