



CROW WING COUNTY MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM

Ask the Master Gardener

MAY 2015 COLUMN

Dear Master Gardener:

I've been trying to grow lupine for the past few years with no luck. Are they hardy here?

Lupine (*Lupinus*) are cool climate perennials native to North America. The Russell hybrids are hardy in zones 3-7 and were developed by George Russell around 1937. Lupines bloom in late spring and early summer and have striking, bold upright spikes that are dense with pea-like flowers. The stately lupines have a wide range of strong colored flowers in shades of cream, pink, yellow, blue, violet and some varieties that are bicolored. They should be planted in full sun and in well-drained, moderately fertile, slightly acidic, sandy soil. Lupines require plenty of water and should be kept evenly moist throughout the growing season. Lupine flowers attract butterflies and hummingbirds.

Dear Master Gardener:

Will lavender grow in the Brainerd Lakes area?

Most lavenders (*Lavandula*) are hardy in zones 5-9, so unfortunately they are not hardy here in the Brainerd Lakes area, which is zone 3.

Dear Master Gardener:

I love watching hummingbirds and was wondering what I can plant in my flower gardens to attract them.

Try to keep something in bloom continuously throughout the summer to keep the hummingbirds visiting your gardens. Plant flowers that have nectar-rich, tubular blooms such as fuchsia, salvia and petunias. Hummingbirds can easily access the nectar with their long, narrow bills and tongues. Hummingbirds usually feed while hovering, so flowers that either dangle or protrude out will provide enough air space for the birds' beating wings. They can see the color red from afar, so flowers in red shades always get their attention; however, they will happily sip nectar from flowers in almost any color. Plants with multiple flowers in open clusters are appealing to hummingbirds. Other annuals they favor are geraniums, flowering tobacco, nasturtiums, lantana and impatiens.

A hardy, showy perennial vine that hummingbirds love is *Lonicera* 'Dropmore Scarlet' (honeysuckle vine). Grow it on a trellis and watch the hummingbirds flock to the gorgeous, tubular orange flowers that bloom off and on throughout the summer. Perennials that hummingbirds are also attracted to include Penstemon, Phlox, Monarda (bee balm), Columbine, Hemerocallis (daylily), Lupine, Liatris and Veronica. Biennials such as foxgloves

and hollyhocks entice hummingbirds. A shrub that invites hummingbirds (and butterflies) to visit is the weigela, which has a spectacular display of bright pink, tubular flowers in early summer with intermittent bloom throughout the rest of the growing season. 'Centennial', 'Minuet', 'Pink Poppet', 'Polka' and 'Rumba' are hardy to -35°F.

WILDFLOWERS TO LOOK FOR IN MAY

wild strawberry
wood anemone
pussytoes
Canada violet
Mayflower
starflower
bunchberry
marsh marigold
bluebead
bird's eye primrose
various violets
Jack-in-the-pulpit
penstemon
lupine

geranium
Canadian wild ginger
Labrador tea
hepatica
columbine
calla lily
bloodroot
Corydalis
trout lily
Virginia waterleaf
Virginia bluebells
wood sorrel
trillium

MAY GARDEN TIPS

- According to DNR records, the last frost-free date in Crow Wing County falls between May 22 and 28. Resist the urge to plant most annual flowers and vegetables before then. If you buy them before those dates, be prepared to cover them when temperatures hover near 32° degrees F. Also be aware that yards may contain pockets of mini-climates that may be warmer or colder than the spot holding your thermometer.
- Vegetables that can be planted in early May because of their cold tolerance are parsley, lettuce, early cabbage, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, kale and onions. Wait until late May or early June to plant beans, sweet corn, tomatoes, melons and squash.
- Start a vigorous and regular weed removal plan. Weeds removed now can't produce seed that would germinate later in the summer.
- Begin deer and rabbit repellent use and install fences and other physical restraints now before those critters put you on their regular meal run.
- Prepare beds by adding organic matter to the top 8-12 inches of soil.
- Fertilize raspberries late this month. Apply ¼ c. of ammonium nitrate (33-0-0) per hill.
- Lawns generally need 1 inch of water per week. Keep grass at 3 – 3 ½ inches in height. Mow frequently, removing no more than 1/3 of blade height at each mowing.
- Perennials need very little fertilizer. Top dress established plantings with several inches of compost every 3-4 years.

QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS?

Crow Wing County Master Gardeners are trained and certified volunteers for the University of Minnesota Extension. All information given in this column is based on research and information provided by the University. To ask a question, call the Master Gardener Help Line at 218-824-1000, extension 4040 and leave a message. A Master Gardener will return your call.

UMN Extension Crow Wing County Master Gardeners' Website

<http://crowwingmastergardeners.org/>



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