



Baptisia (*False Indigo*)

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Baptisia is a perennial legume and is often an underused garden plant. It is native to eastern North American prairies, meadows, open woods and along streams. Blue False indigo (common name) was once used to make blue dye. This long-lived plant grows foot-long spires of colored flowers which bloom early to mid-spring. The individual flowers are about an inch long, and they last just 2-3 weeks. It grows in bushy clumps and produces oblong seed pods after flowers drop, shaking the dry pods produces and sound like a rattlesnake. Deadheading will eliminate the pods weighing down the stems. However, the big, showy seed pods can be used in dried arrangements. This large, shrub-sized perennial does well in cottage gardens, meadow plantings and among native restorations. The shape adds vertical interest, and attractive foliage creates a good backdrop for later blooming perennials.

Type	Perennial
Hardiness Zone	3 - 9
Sun	Does best in full sun, can tolerate light shade
Bloom Time	April - May
Height	3 - 4'
Spread	3 - 4' wide when mature
Tolerance	Drought tolerant
Attracts	Several butterfly species
Additional Features	Deer resistant, extensive root system

Soil and Site Recommendations

- Drainage: well drained gravelly or sandy soils
- Soil pH: does not bloom well in acidic soils

Planting Recommendations

- When to plant: early spring (preferably from seed - need cold stratification to improve germination), may also plant stem cuttings in spring; will not bloom for at least 2 - 3 years
- Depth of planting: seeds - ¼", plants - to cover deep root system
- Mulching: none
- Spacing: 18 - 36" apart, depending on variety
- Spread: 2 - 4'
- Division/transplant tips: best not to be disturbed due to deep tap root, may be transplanted in cool weather if watered regularly initially

Maintenance

- Watering: keep well-watered until established, overwatering can cause stems to flop over
- Fertilization: does not require much fertilization
- Pinching/deadheading: deadhead to keep seed pods from weighing down/flopping over
- Annual maintenance: Cut back to ground in fall or winter

Common Problems

Pests: attracts few insects, though weevils can infest the seed pods.

Deer do not favor this plant.

Resources

<https://hort.extension.wisc.edu/>

<https://hgic.clemson.edu/>

Questions or problems: “What’s wrong with my plant” for information on garden pests and diseases:

<http://apps.extension.umn.edu/garden/diagnose/plant/>

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Baptisia Tinctoria



Baptisia Australis



False Indigo, Purple Smoke