

Baptisia australis (L.) R. Br. ex Ait. f.

Blue wild indigo, Wild blue indigo, Blue false indigo

Fabaceae (Pea Family)

Synonyms: *Baptisia australis* var. *minor*, *Baptisia minor*

USDA Symbol: **BAAU**

USDA Native Status: Native to U.S.



Rising 2-4 ft. high from a woody base, blue wild indigo is a bushy, robust perennial. Flowers are blue-purple and pea-like, congested in dense, upright, terminal spikes, 4-16 in. long. Leaves are divided into three leaflets. In late fall the plant turns silvery-gray, sometimes breaking off at ground level and tumbling about in the wind.

Like other members of the pea family, this plant requires the presence of microorganisms that inhabit nodules on the plants root system and produce nitrogen compounds necessary for the plants survival.

PLANT CHARACTERISTICS

Duration: Perennial

Habit: Herb

Leaf Arrangement: Alternate

Size Notes: 3 to 5 feet tall by 3 feet wide

Leaf: Blue

Flower:

Fruit:

Size Class: 3-6 ft.

BLOOM INFORMATION

Bloom Color: Blue , Purple

Bloom Time: Apr , May , Jun , Jul

DISTRIBUTION

USA: AL , AR , CT , DC , GA , IA , IL , IN , KS , KY , MA , MD , MI , MO , NC , NE , NH , NJ , NY , OH , OK , PA , TN , TX , VA , VT , WV

Native Distribution: PA to s. IN, s. to GA & TN; introduced in New England; var. *minor* ranges from IA & s.e. NE to TX

Native Habitat: Wood edges; limestone glades; prairies

USDA Native Status: L48(N), CAN(I)

GROWING CONDITIONS

Water Use: Medium

Light Requirement: Sun

Soil Moisture: Moist

Soil pH: Acidic (pH<6.8) , Circumneutral (pH 6.8-7.2)

CaCO₃ Tolerance: Medium

Soil Description: Moist, well-drained, clays. Tolerates lime.

BENEFIT

Use Medicinal: Amerindians used root tea as emetic and purgative; cold tea given to stop vomiting. Root poulticed as an anti-inflammatory. Held in mouth to treat toothaches. Toxic.

Use Other: Plant juice turns purple on exposure and is a fair substitute for true indigo in making blue dye.

Warning: Other plants in this genus are poisonous if ingested, although no human fatalities have been recorded. Sensitivity to a toxin varies with a person's age, weight, physical condition, and individual susceptibility. Children are most vulnerable because of their curiosity and small size.

Toxicity can vary in a plant according to season, the plant's different parts, and its stage of growth; and plants can absorb toxic substances, such as herbicides, pesticides, and pollutants from the water, air, and soil.

Conspicuous Flowers: yes

VALUE TO BENEFICIAL INSECTS

Special Value to Native Bees

Special Value to Bumble Bees

This information was provided by the Pollinator Program at [The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation](#).

PROPAGATION

Description: Seeds may be sown outside in late fall or the following spring without any cold treatment. Plant 1/2 deep. Plants germinate quickly but do not flower for up to 3 years. The tough rootstock can be divided in fall or spring when the plant is dormant. T

Seed Collection: About six weeks past flowering, the pods should be black and beginning to open. Collect at this time comb the seeds from the pod. Mature, viable seeds will be brownish, hard and rounded. Store in sealed, refrigerated containers.

Seed Treatment: Not Available

Commercially Avail: yes

SOURCE: http://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id_plant=BAAU