

## Pests

Lupines are generally bothered by only two pests, slugs and aphids, and then only in some years and in some locations.

Slugs can be hand-picked off the plants at dawn or dusk or on rainy days. There's not usually all that many slugs around, so picking them for a few days in a row usually eliminates most of them.

Aphids may show up on the growing flower spike, and occasionally on some of the leaf stalks. Spraying them two or three times a few days apart with soapy water (not detergent!) will most often eliminate the problem.

## Winter Care

Lupine stalks can be cut back in mid August, or any time after the seed pods have opened (or you have gathered them). The leaves will be building root reserves for next year's flowering until they die back in November. Lupines don't need mulching, especially if mice or voles might live in the mulch and eat lupine roots for their winter diet.

## Gathering your own seeds

After the lupine blossoms go by, if pollinated they will be replaced by little green pods with three to seven seeds in each. By late July these will turn brown, then black. If not harvested, they will then pop, scattering the seed all about. If you want to collect the seeds, cut the whole seed head off before the pods pop and drop the whole head into a large paper bag. Close the bag with a clothes pin and allow the pods to dry for a month in a dry area. Then strip the pods from the stalk, and break open the pods to release the seeds. Germination is best if planted in late fall or very early spring of any year, since the most of hard-coated seeds need to be wet and freeze to break dormancy.

## Seeds

Every August we gather seeds from the lupine plantings at our farm and offer them in 1/2 teaspoon packets at two dollars each (approx. 60 seeds). There are no wild lupine plantings nearby for any crossing to occur.

## Baby Lupines

We also offer baby lupines started from seed this spring in individual pots. Some pots have more than one lupine seedling, which will undoubtedly provide more than one color bloom. They will bloom starting in June of their second year. We sell these for \$2 a pot or \$20 a dozen.



Choose the colors you want from our wide selection of hardy one-year-old lupines in their first blooming year.  
\$8 a pot or 3 pots for \$20

**Buy locally grown...  
right from the grower!**

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# Lupines

Lupinus polyphyllus

## Colors

The most common colors of lupines found in the wild along roadsides are blues, purples and whites.

By contrast, Snakeroot Organic Farm offers lupines of the the Russell Extra Choice strain with a full range of brilliant lupine colors all the way from white, pink, violet-blue, red, rose, yellow, peach, salmon and many splendid bi-color combinations.

The Russell strain was originally introduced around 1935 by George Russell, a Yorkshire, England, railroad crossing guard, through his extensive selection and hybridization.

Lupines are perennials which blossom in June every year beginning their second year and continue doing so for many years. Some plants, when started from seed early enough in the spring, will flower in late summer of their first year. Thus, once a planting becomes established and begins to naturally re-seed itself, there can be a "second crop" of blossoms in August.

Each blossom on a lupine flower spike is made up of two parts, which can be the same or different colors. Each plant will send up the same color flowers year after year. Blooms of established plantings are over a foot long.

## Growing Conditions

Lupines like a moist area with good drainage. They do not like wet feet, so never plant them

where there is standing water. Banks and hillsides make excellent locations. Lupines are very cold hardy, and like full sun to partial shade.

## Plant Habit

Lupines have a wonderful root system consisting of a fleshy "taproot" with a few big prongs. Each Lupine will grow a larger root over the years and soon send up half a dozen or more flower stalks. Flowering lasts almost the entire month of June. Bumblebees love lupines.

Lupines are a legume, related to beans, peas, carob, peanuts, honeylocusts, vetch and clover. They often have nodules of beneficial nitrogen-fixing bacteria growing on their roots, which help the plant grow by turning atmospheric nitrogen into nitrates the plant can use. This allows lupines to grow vigorously in soils otherwise too poor. Lupines actually improve the soils they grow in.

Individual lupines plants do not spread. As they get older they get bigger and send up more flower stalks. Lupines, do, however, produce dozens of pea-like seeds per plant, which fall to the ground when the pods snap open in early August. This results in many lupine seedlings surrounding the mother plant the following spring. Transplanting these seedlings in mid-May is the quickest and easiest way to rapidly expand your lupine bed. Or, you can gather seed pods before they open and plant the seeds in the fall in a nursery bed. They will then be ready for transplanting to a permanent home in their second spring.

Seedlings from any plant will result in colors ranging from the color of the mother plant to the colors of the other lupines in the area. Only rarely will all of the seedlings from the mother plant all have the same coloring as the mother plant. Even if there are no other lupines in the area, the genetic makeup of the mother plant may include colors which only get expressed in her offspring.

## Lupines Instead of Lawn

Instead of running the lawn mower along steeply sloping banks in your lawn, consider planting lupines there. Not only will the slope provide an excellent display for your lupines, but it will save you from ever having to mow that tricky area again.

Lupine plantings are low-maintenance. As you can tell by the wild varieties found along the sides of country roads, lupines do just fine with zero maintenance. However, lupines will benefit by spreading some lime, manure or compost around the plants in the spring. The entire top dies back in the fall to re-grow again the following year.

With a height of 30"-42", lupines make good backdrops for a flower garden. They do well against a house, even if the rain from the eaves regularly gives them a good dousing. Lupines naturalize easily, and spread only slowly through scattering of their seeds.

## How to Establish a Planting

You can begin by simply digging a hole slightly bigger than the pot the lupine came in and setting the lupine in it, planting it no deeper than it was originally. Plant about 2 feet apart. Add a little compost if the soil is poor and lupines will need no further encouragement. Disturb the roots as little as possible when transplanting. After planting, douse the plant well with water to settle in the roots.

## Until You Plant

Since lupines need plenty of water, we suggest while your lupine is waiting to be planted set the pot in a pie plate of water to avoid having to water it twice a day. When lupines begin to need water, you will notice the leaves drooping, but they will come right back after watering.