

LOBELIA:

Crystal Maceira, LMT, MH

“One of the World’s Greatest Herbs”

USE WITH CAUTION!

There is a controversy to how safe Lobelia is. Of the several beautiful varieties of this plant, *Lobelia inflata* is the one that has the medicinal values I will talk about today. Other common names for this herb are pukeweed and Indian tobacco. There are good reasons for this, which will be discussed here. This article will also discuss Lobelia itself, why it is considered safe, why others feel it is a poison, and famous herbalists’ experiences with it.

WHAT IS LOBELIA INFLATA?

Lobelia inflata is an annual or biennial, meaning it reseeds every year or two. It grows from 6 to 39 inches tall and has stems with tiny little hairs at the bottom, becoming smoother at the top, with light-blue or violet flowers that are asymmetrical and bisexual. Lobelia was named after Mattias de Lobel, a botanist who lived in the 17th century. The stems, leaves, flowers, and seeds are what is used. The main alkaloid is Lobeline, which is in the seed, but its other alkaloids include lobelacrin, lobelianin, and 14 pyridine alkaloids (with a total of 52 alkaloids). It also contains acids, fats and gum.

IS LOBELIA SAFE? OR IS IT A POISON?

This has been the controversy for over 200 years. Joseph Meyer’s book, *The Herbalist*, states that, “lobelia is too dangerous for internal use by the unskilled.”

In the June 1850 edition of *Provincial Medical and Surgical Journal*, there’s an article titled, “Supposed Death from *Lobelia inflata*.” In it, it does not say that lobelia killed a women, but it does write about her husband administering lobelia to her, and that she eventually dies from other complications. CBSNews.com classified it as one of twelve dangerous supplements along with chaparral, comfrey, yarrow and colloidal silver.

Dr. Herbert Nowell talks about this misclassification and Lobelia’s use by the famous herbalist, Dr. Samuel Thomson. He writes: “So successfully did Dr. Thomson

use it that the regulars of his day classed it a poison, as some writers said only a poison could bring about the speedy results that Dr. Thomson obtained by its use.”

HERBALISTS’ EXPERIENCES

There have been many herbalists that have used Lobelia with great success, with the herb having miraculous and life-saving benefits. Yale’s Professor William Tully wrote to Dr. H. Lee of Middletown, Connecticut in 1838, about how safe lobelia was and that it did not have any narcotic powers whatsoever.

Dr. Samuel Thomson, considered the father of American herbalism, said, “there is no vegetable which the Earth produces more harmless in its effect on the human system than Lobelia, and none more powerful in removing disease and promoting health.”

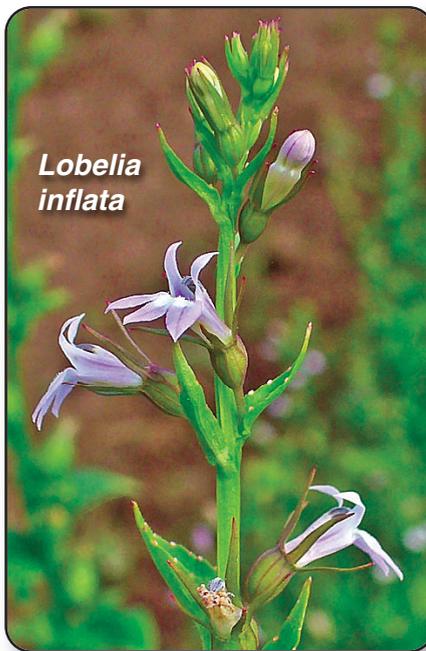
He first learned of this plant when he was searching for cows in the fields. He was about four year old when he came upon this singular stemmed plant with pods he had never seen before. His curiosity overcame him when he picked the seed pods and ate them. After vomiting profusely, he felt better, and then decided he would use this plant for sport for the next 20 years—not knowing the medicinal value. One day, he gave it to one of his coworkers, and after he was done vomiting, he said that he felt better than he

had in years. After he learned of its value, he used it with every disease, “to great advantage.”

Felter and Lloyd both state that the emetic (vomiting) action is so prompt and decided that the contained alkaloid could not, under ordinary circumstances, produce fatal results.

Dr. Herbert Nowell, who founded Dominion Herbal College in Canada, used Lobelia for thirty years without any incident and only with favorable results.

Dr. John R. Christopher, Herbalist and Naturopathic Physician, whom I had the pleasure to know and who is my reason for being an herbalist today, used Lobelia in his practice for many years, with many “miraculous healings” on the old and young alike. He was very unsettled about how allopaths would describe Lobelia as a poison. Dr. Christopher knows from





**Dr. John R. Christopher,
Master Herbalist, Founder
of School of Natural Healing**

personal experience that this is not true. One day, he reached for an unlabeled bottle thinking it was apple cider vinegar and honey. He took four tablespoons at one time! After “retching and vomiting profusely,” he felt better. Nothing else happened except a good cleaning out!

LOBELIA’S APPLICATIONS

Dr. Christopher calls this herb a “thinking herb”

because of its selective abilities. I will give a couple of examples to help explain this further:

A pregnant mother is in trouble of miscarriage. If the baby is too weak or has died, the Lobelia will cause the baby to abort. If the baby is well and strong, but the mother is weak, then the Lobelia will strengthen and heal the mother so she can carry the baby to term.

The next example is in the case of a very large boil on the side of the neck. If the person is fragile and sickly, then the Lobelia will cause the boil to burst open so the pus can drain externally. If the person is strong and robust, the Lobelia will cause the boil to be drained internally and go through the elimination channels like the kidneys and the colon.

The alkaloid lobeline is an effective expectorant (promotes the discharge of mucus from the respiratory tract). It has been long used for asthma because the action can involve stimulating the release of epinephrine by the adrenal glands, binding to beta-2 receptors, thereby helping to relax the airways.

Dr. Christopher told a story of a older man who had severe asthma for over 20 years. He couldn’t sleep laying down and could not work. So Dr. Christopher gave him peppermint tea, waited 15 minutes, and then gave him a teaspoonful of tincture of Lobelia, waited ten minutes, and then gave him a another dose when the man started throwing up mucous and other materials of various colors, from light to dark, which ended up being a cupful or so. The man went home, laid down

in his bed, and slept for 12 hours. He never slept in his recliner again, went back to work as a gardener, and never had another asthma attack.

USE WITH PRUDENCE & WISDOM!

Lobelia is a general corrector of the whole system. Dr. Christopher, Dr. Thomson, and other skilled herbalists all agree that it is one of the greatest herbs ever given to the world. It is a proficient relaxant and anti-spasmodic, thereby relaxing airways, relieving the respiratory, muscular, and nervous systems, especially calming the sympathetic (fight-or-flight) nervous system.

Lobelia is a very powerful herb and must be used wisely and advisedly. As Joseph Meyer had written in his book, it is too dangerous for the unskilled. Overdose of Lobelia may cause side effects including nausea, diarrhea, cough, dizziness, sweating, convulsion, fast heartbeat, and low blood pressure.

I use lobelia in several of my formulas because, as Dr. Christopher said, it is a “thinking herb,” and tells the other herbs “what to do.” I have never had any problems using this herb and feel it is safe. I agree that it is one of the best herbs God has created for the benefit of man. Feel free to contact me with any questions. ■



Crystal Maceira is a Master Herbalist, Certified IIPA Iridologist, and Certified Bowenwork Practitioner. She has been a massage therapist for over 18 years. She has been teaching and practicing iris analysis and herbology locally and abroad. She currently lives in Helena. Find out more at PositiveLifeChange.info, where she blogs almost daily and on social media platforms. Email her

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Read Crystal’s other articles about Iridology, Sclerology and Bowenwork in the Archives at NaturalLifeNews.com.



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