

Blue Columbine

Aquilegia coerulea James

Distribution: Native to the higher elevations of the intermountain West, is best suited to mountain gardens and areas of the West with cool nights.

Growth: Columbine is a bushy, clump-forming perennial, 1-2 feet tall and 1-2 feet wide, growing from a taproot. It blooms April-July. Most species are short-lived, living only two or three years.

Adaptability: Tolerates a wide range of soils except heavy, poorly drained ones. It prefers rich, moist soils with light to moderate shade.

Comments: The flowers are very variable in color, from pale blue (as in the species name *coerulea*) to white, pale yellow and pinkish; very commonly the flowers are bicolored, with the sepals a different shade to the petals. They consist of five petals, five sepals and an ovary surrounded. Five long spurs hang below the calyx and contain nectar at their tips, accessible only to hawkmoths. In addition to hawkmoths, pollinators for this flower include bumble-bees, solitary bees and syrphid flies. Its native habitats include moist woods and open mountain meadows.

