

American bellflower (*Campanulastrum americanum*)

Family: Bellflower (*Campanulaceae*)

DESCRIPTION: American bellflower, also known as tall bellflower, is a native annual or biennial herbaceous plant found in moist, open woods and thickets, along woodland edges, and on streambanks. From July to September, its showy, blue-violet flowers can add unexpected color to a midsummer deciduous forest or shade garden.

USES: American bellflower's height and color make it a good choice as an accent plant in annual or perennial gardens, rain gardens and woodland and shoreline restorations. With a spike of flowers that open from the bottom up, a single plant offers an extended flowering season to bumblebees, leaf-cutting bees, sweat bees, butterflies and skippers. Deer rarely eat the plants.

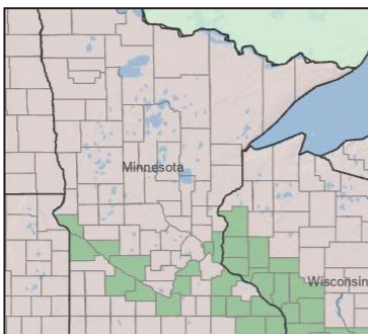
REFERENCES:

[Minnesota Wildflowers](#)

Landscaping with Native Plants of Minnesota, Lynn M. Steiner

[USDA Plants Database](#)

[Illinois Wildflowers](#)



Range Map Credit: USDA Plants Database



Photo Credit: Susan Nelson

Planting Recommendations

American bellflower grows best in shade or part shade and damp or slightly dry, loamy soils. It is propagated only by seeds, which can be sown outdoors in fall or treated to cold, moist conditions indoors for 30 days and then sown in pots. The tiny seeds are no more than a millimeter long and should be barely covered. With light and warmth — about 70 degrees — they should germinate in four weeks. In the wild, some seeds germinate the same year they are shed and grow rosettes of heart-shaped

leaves before winter. These biennials produce an upright stem the next spring, as do the annuals that germinate in spring. American bellflower will self-seed, especially where there is some disturbance, but it is not an aggressive spreader. In a garden, disturb the soil slightly around the plants to ensure they return the following year. The plants will drop their leaves in drought. Good companions include woodland natives such as wild columbine, blue cohosh and wild geranium.

STATEWIDE WETLAND INDICATOR STATUS: FAC

ID: Stems grow 2 to 6 feet tall. Alternate, egg-shaped or oval leaves grow 3 to 6 inches long and up to 2 inches wide, with toothed edges. Blue-violet, wheel-shaped flowers are in terminal spikes up to 2 feet long. Each flower is 1 inch wide with a long, descending style curved up at the tip.

SIMILAR SPECIES:

Native harebell (*Campanulastrum rotundifolia*) and non-native, fast-spreading and difficult to control creeping bellflower (*Campanulastrum rapunculoides*) have bell-shaped flowers. Creeping bellflower grows up to 2 feet tall. Leaves grow up to 3 inches long and the lowermost leaves have heart-shaped bases. It also spreads by rhizomes, and emerges before the native plant.

Developed by Susan Nelson, a botanist with more than 40 years of experience studying Minnesota flora, and author/curator of [Larkspur Plant Resources](#).

