

***Baptisia australis* (L.) R. Br. ex Ait. f.**  
Blue false indigo

**Family:** Fabaceae

**Synonyms:** *Sophora australis* L.

**Description:** Perennial herb to 1.5 m from thick horizontal root system. Usually much branched bearing conspicuous bunches of blue flowers at the end of the main stem and lateral branches. Pod 3 to 6 cm long.

**Flowering:** May to June

**Fruiting:** June to August

**Similar Species:** *Baptisia australis* is the only Ohio species with dull violet-blue flowers. Other Ohio species of *Baptisia* have white, cream-color, or yellow flowers.



**Total Range: USA:** AL, AR, CT, DC, GA, IA, IL, IN, KS, KY, MA, MD, MI, MO, NC, NH, NJ, OH, OK, PA, SC, TN, TX, VA, WV.

**Ohio Range:** Adams, Clermont, Hamilton, Jefferson, Mahoning, Meigs, Monroe, Montgomery, and Washington.

**Ohio Status:** [www.ohiodnr.com/dnap](http://www.ohiodnr.com/dnap)

**Habitats:** In semi-shaded to open situations; usually in rocky, gravelly or sandy soil: rich woods, alluvial thickets, bluffs, and rocky ledges.

**Threats:** Overshading by woody species as a result of succession; digging by gardeners; major water level changes caused by damming of Ohio River; invasive species (i.e. *Phalaris arundinacea* and *Polygonum cuspidatum*).

**Conservation Potential:** Unknown if natural recovery is allowed, but probably excellent if planted in its native habitat. Steyermark (1963) states that it does well in cultivation and can be raised from seed.

**Inventory Guidelines:** Mature flowering material is recommended for positive identification. Pictures are suitable for identification. Record the number of flowering/fruited plants.

**Comments:** This species has very showy flowers and is favored by many wildflower gardeners. When found, an attempt should be made to determine if the plants that occur naturally or are

escapes from cultivation. There are specimens collected from cultivation from Lake and Perry counties.

For the most part, the current and historical state distribution of this species is limited to areas along the banks of the Ohio River. Plants from localities far from the river or its major tributaries are probably cultivated or adventive origin. Additional native populations should be sought in southern Ohio.

### **Selected References:**

Deam, C.M. 1940. Flora of Indiana. Division Forestry, Dept. Conservation, Indianapolis, Indiana. 1236 pp.

Gleason, H.A., and A. Cronquist. 1991. Manual of vascular plants of northeastern United States and adjacent Canada. New York Botanical Garden, Bronx, New York. 910 pp.

Larisey, M.M. 1940. A monograph of the genus *Baptisia*. Ann. Mo. Bot. Gard. 27:199-218.

Steyermark, J.A. 1963. Flora of Missouri. The Iowa State University Press, Ames, IA. 1728 pp.

Swink, F., and G. Wilhelm. 1994. Plants of the Chicago Region. Morton Arboretum. Lisle, Illinois.



### **Ohio Natural Heritage Program**

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