

## **Harebell** (*Campanula rotundifolia*)

Harebell is a pretty native perennial, with dainty violet-blue bell-shaped flowers on airy thin stalks, hovering over low-growing basal foliage. Delicate in look but hardy in nature, Harebells return reliably after cold winters with some of the earliest foliage in spring. Blooms persist from early summer until late fall.

The flowers of the Harebell are about ¾" long, with 5 petals fused together into a bell, 5 lavender stamens, and 5 long pointed green sepals behind. These nodding flowers are borne singly or in loose clusters from the tips of thread-like stems which grow 6-18 inches tall. Along the slender stems are alternate linear leaves, up to 2" long. The lower basal leaves are round to heart-shaped and usually slightly toothed, but these often wither away by flowering time. The flowers develop into 3-celled capsules (0.1–0.2 inch diameter) that contain numerous tiny seeds. The seeds are dispersed by wind. Like other Campanulas, Harebells exude a milky sap when broken. The root system consists of a taproot.

In Michigan, Harebells grow in clumps on many of our dunes, adding splashes of blue to the dune/beach landscape. Harebells are also found in woods, grassy meadows, along rocky streams and roadsides, and even colonizing cracks in walls or cliff faces. Small bees, butterflies and hummingbirds visit the flowers for nectar. However, the slender foliage and tiny seeds are insubstantial, possessing low food value for wildlife.

Harebells are circumboreal, which means they are native to temperate regions of the northern hemisphere around the globe. The Latin "*Campana*" means little bell. "*Rotundifolia*" refers to the round basal leaves at the base of the stem.

Long-blooming, Harebells add charm to any garden. They produce more flowers in sunny locations, but also do well in part shade. Because the basal foliage is so short and the flower stalks are so thin, Harebells seem to fit into whatever space you give them, weaving well with other perennials. Drought resistant, they prefer dry to average moisture conditions and do well in sandy soil or rock gardens. They will also thrive in ordinary garden soil, but tend to be out-competed by taller, more aggressive plants without thinning.

Propagation is by dividing the root ball or by seed. Seed heads can be collected after they have dried on the plant, and the seeds sown the following spring after the last frost. Seedlings will not flower until the second year. Young plants can have difficulty standing up on their own the first couple years....Harebells do best grown in crowds.

**Do not confuse Harebell (*Campanula rotundifolia*) with Creeping Bellflower (*Campanula rapunculoides*)** which has similar but larger flowers and broader foliage. Creeping Bellflower is a perennial from Eurasia that has become an invasive in North America. These plants produce deep, taproot-shaped tubers, any piece of which can sprout into a new plant. Creeping Bellflowers are extremely difficult to eradicate.

More information and photos available at:

<http://www.illinoiswildflowers.info/prairie/plantx/harebellx.htm>

<http://plants.usda.gov/java/profile?symbol=CARO2>

[http://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id\\_plant=CARO2](http://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id_plant=CARO2)

-Joyce Turharsky