

Grass-leaf blazing star

Liatris pilosa

Family: Asteraceae **Genus:** *Liatris* **Species:** *pilosa*
Average Height: 24 inches **Bloom Time:** August–October
Elevation Range: Found primarily in the Coastal Plain and Piedmont (0' - 900'). Occasionally grows at low elevations in the Blue Ridge **Geologic/Soil Associations:** Not particular about soil chemistry, but intolerant of frequent soil disturbance. **Soil Drainage Class and Moisture Regime:** Well-drained. Xeric to Sub-mesic **Light and Aspect:** Sun to part sun. Flat, south, east, and west

Habitat Associations: Bright canopy openings in dry pine and oak-hickory woodlands, tidal marsh edges, unplowed fields, powerline rights-of-ways, and old roadbanks. Especially abundant on landscapes maintained with periodic fire.

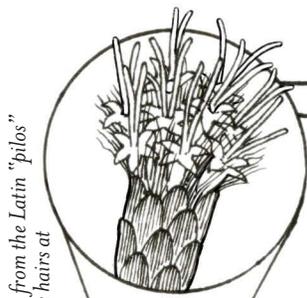
Flora Associations: This beauty's dramatic lavender-purple flowering spikes bloom gradually from top to bottom. North America is the only continent lucky enough to harbor native *Liatris* species. All *Helianthus* (sunflower) and *Echinacea* (coneflower) species are also endemic to the continent. Here in the Piedmont of Virginia, you might find *Helianthus divaricatus* or *Helianthus atrorubens* growing alongside grass-leaf blazingstar. Though it is very rare now, smooth coneflower (*Echinacea laevigata*) would have shared habitat with *Liatris pilosa* in pre-settlement savannas and other natural grasslands underlain with mafic bedrock in the Piedmont region. Most of these rich grasslands have long since succumbed to the repeated attacks of the plow and domesticated hoof, and do not return in the shady tangles of weedy overgrowth that emerge after field abandonment, nor on landscapes where fire is excluded..

Fauna Associations: *Liatris pilosa* supports hummingbirds and the flowers are pollinated by long-tongued bees, butterflies, and skippers. Indeed, they are highly attractive to insects of all sorts, and are visited by hoverflies, beetles, and day-flying moths as well. Rabbits relish blazing star foliage. If your *Liatris* plants suddenly topple, you be lucky enough to have a native meadow vole (*Microtus pennsylvanicus*). These burrowing herbivores have been munching on *Liatris* roots for thousands of years.

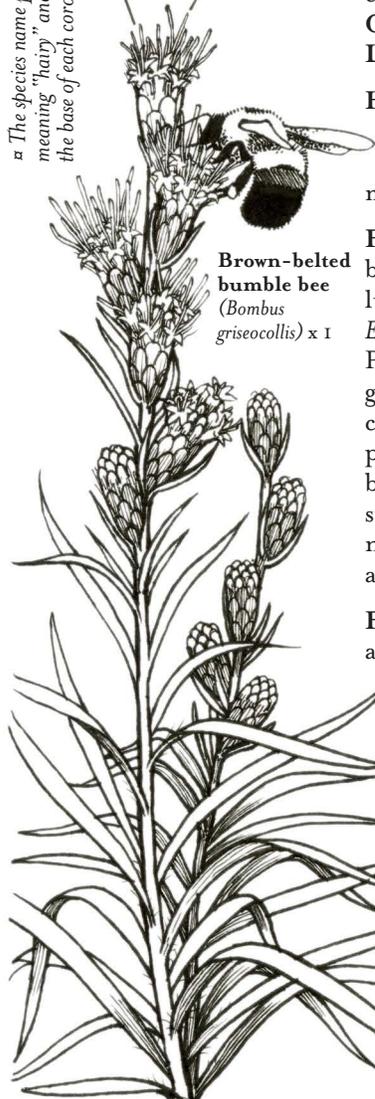
Notes: The leaves and the roots contain chemical compounds that are synthesized for use in blood thinners.

With anti-inflammatory, analgesic, and antiseptic properties, a poultice made from *Liatris* leaves has been used to heal skin wounds. Indigenous People use *Liatris* to treat sore throats and as an ingredient in insect repellent.

Arbuscular Mycorrhizal Fungi (AMF) harvest nutrients from the soil and transfer them to plants. Without a diverse set of AMF many grassland plants like *Liatris* won't thrive.



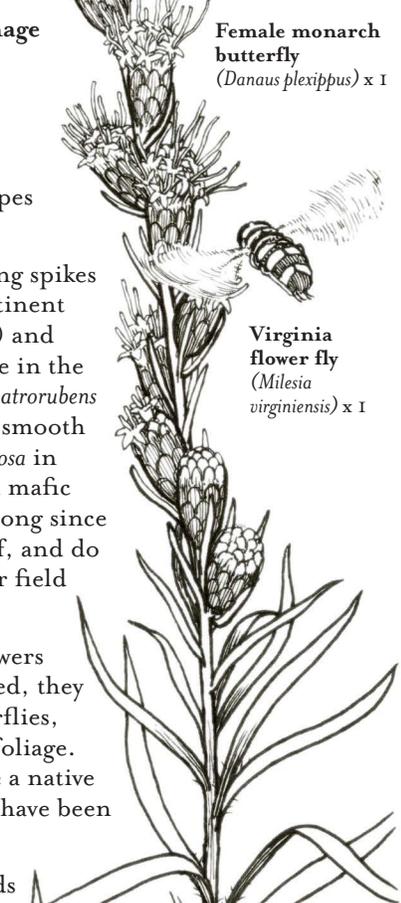
The species name *pilosa* derives from the Latin "pilos" meaning "hairy" and refers to the hairs at the base of each corolla tube.



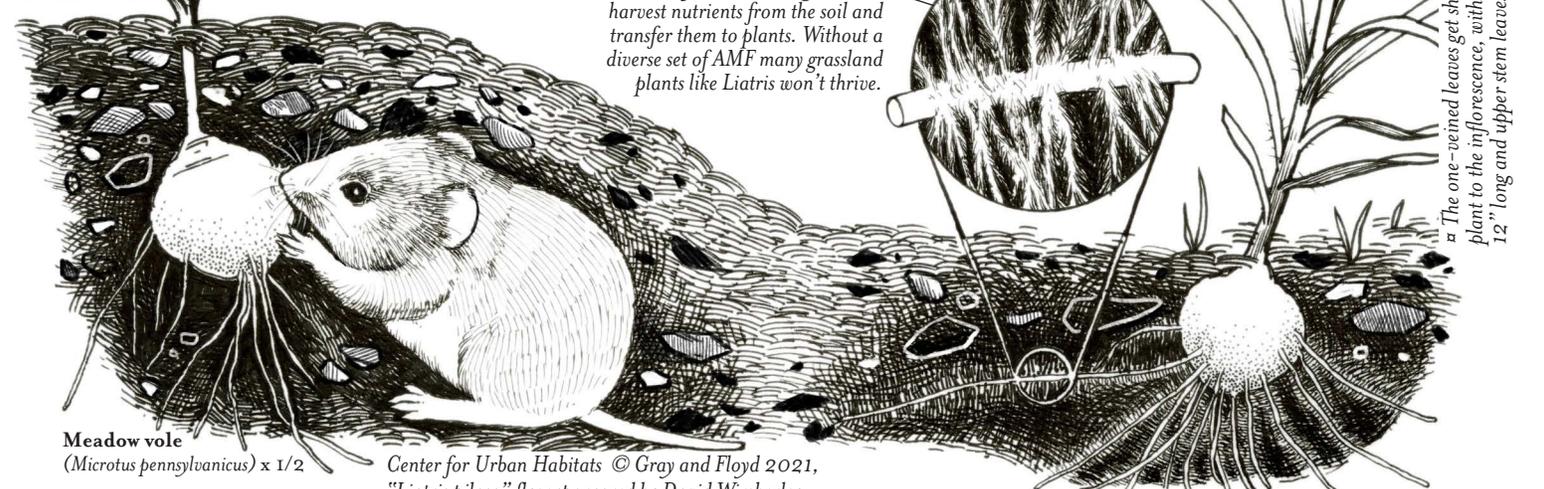
Brown-belted bumble bee
(*Bombus griseocollis*) x 1



Female monarch butterfly
(*Danaus plexippus*) x 1



Virginia flower fly
(*Milesia virginiensis*) x 1



Liatris flower moth
(*Schinia sanguinea*) x 1

Meadow vole
(*Microtus pennsylvanicus*) x 1/2

The one-veined leaves get shorter from the base of the plant to the inflorescence, with basal leaves growing up to 12" long and upper stem leaves becoming only 2-3" long.