Cardinal Flower by Patty Hamilton

Latin name: *Lobelia cardinalis*
Family: Campanulaceae

I see this plant every year in a swampy area of the Northwest River. It is a Southeastern native perennial and is hard to miss due to the eye catching bright red flowers. Cardinal flower gets its name because the flower color and shape resemble the Roman Catholic Cardinal's miters and robes. *Lobelias cardinalis* is the only red lobelia and is a member to the Bluebell family. It needs moisture to thrive, so is a great plant for low wetlands and streams. It would also be a great addition to a rain garden. It does well in partially shady areas with no intense afternoon sun. In this area, you will usually see it blooming in July-September on plants that are 3 to 4 ft. tall. Cardinal flowers depend on hummingbirds, for pollination, due to the long tubular flowers. It is an important nectar source for butterflies and hummingbirds and is a prolific self-seeder. It is not an aggressive as the parent plant only lives for a few years. No disease or pest problems. Grows in USDA Zones 3 - 9

Photo Credits:
Plant in NWRP by Patty Hamilton
Flowerhead: Missouri Botanical Garden

Reference:
Clemson.edu
Virginia Native Plant Society