

Lupine — Aataq

AATAT SUIT'KAIT CUCUNARTUT. – LUPINE FLOWERS ARE BEAUTIFUL.



Photo: Lupine growing in a coastal Alaskan meadow.

Lupine (*Lupinus nootkatensis*) is a common, brightly flowering plant that can grow up to three feet tall. It has a long, stout stem that supports a dense cluster of blue, pink, or occasionally white flowers. It grows clusters of six to eight silky leaves and long woody roots that are a favorite food of brown bears. Lupine is a member of the pea family found along the North Pacific coast from British Columbia to Japan. It thrives on dry slopes, meadows, and gravel bars, where it produces seed-filled pods. Beware! Lupine seeds are poisonous. When ingested they can cause a fatal inflammation of the stomach and intestines.

Alutiiq people once harvested lupine rhizomes for food. This part of the plant grows underground, between the stem and the roots. Lupine rhizomes were commonly collected in the spring, when most tender, although they could be taken at any time of year. The rhizomes were cleaned, cut in half, and fried in oil to create a tasty dish.

Photo: Lupine growing in a coastal Alaskan meadow.