

STERN'S INTRODUCTORY PLANT BIOLOGY

About the Cover

One of the most beautiful places on earth is along the banks of Lake Tekapo, on the South Island of New Zealand, during the summer months. Each year, the lakeshore is covered by the Russell lupine (*Lupinus polyphyllus*), with flowers displaying brilliant blue, orange, pink, purple, white, and yellow colors, or mixtures thereof. As shown on the cover of this book, the result is a stunning display of flowers in the foreground, coupled with the turquoise-colored water of Lake Tekapo and mountains (Southern Alps) in the background. The Russell lupine can be a fairly large, herbaceous plant, growing up to 1.52 meters (4 feet, 11 inches) tall, with dozens of pea-like flowers produced on a tall spike. Individual flowers (most often visited by bumblebees) are about 1.25 centimeters (0.49 inches) long, and are usually blue or purple in wild plants. There are over 200 species within the *Lupinus* genus, and they can be highly regarded for their nitrogen-fixing abilities as well as forage for livestock. Lupine seeds of some species have even been used for human consumption, although caution should be used due to possible allergic reactions and presence of toxic alkaloids. Despite their beauty and benefits, some lupines can be considered as an invasive species because they are hearty plants and can easily take over native plants in poor-quality soils. The Russell lupine is thought to have been introduced to the South Island of New Zealand in the late 1950s to enrich the area with colorful roadside vegetation for tourists.

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