

# Snow Princess Is Simply Unbelievable

BY NORMAN WINTER

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Snow Princess just may be the all time winner when it comes to sweeping awards. I first wrote about this new hybrid alyssum in July 2009, mainly based on how it had done in trials in Mississippi.

Now looking back over the two years since, it is obvious Snow Princess is a thoroughbred in the world of flowers. It has garnered more than 60 awards in the United States and has become highly recognized overseas as well.

If you somehow have escaped reading about Snow Princess and wonder what all of the fuss is about, ask yourself this question. Can you imagine a sweet alyssum blooming all summer in the south where temperatures are torrid, sweltering and off the charts?

To be honest most of us involved with plant trials could not either. We took it upon ourselves to put them in the trials with what we believed to be the probable outcome — turning Proven Winners into Losers, if you will.

We planted it in our Mississippi State University trials in the spring of 2009, and it literally exploded into blooms. Then it stopped, and I thought to myself, "See, I knew it wouldn't last." But then it started growing and spreading and I remembered hearing one representative say the Snow Princess ate a Supertunia in a basket.

In our trials it started blooming and kept growing. Our June temperatures were hot enough to act like a flame thrower on most lobularias. We had no rain, and we struggled with water and water pressure at our trials. But the blooms increased.

When nurserymen visited the trials and found that it was snowing in July, they took pictures of the 4-6 inches that had accumulated. Snow Princess had reached about 6 inches high, filled out its allotted space since planting in April and cascaded over the edge of the box.

So now after two years of trialing we know



MCT PHOTO

**Snow princess forms a draping blanket of white in mixed containers.**

Snow Princess prefers fertile, well-drained soil with plenty of sun, although many have started raving about it in part shade too. While unbelievably heat tolerant, it is not a xeriscape type plant, it does need water and it will reward your efforts.

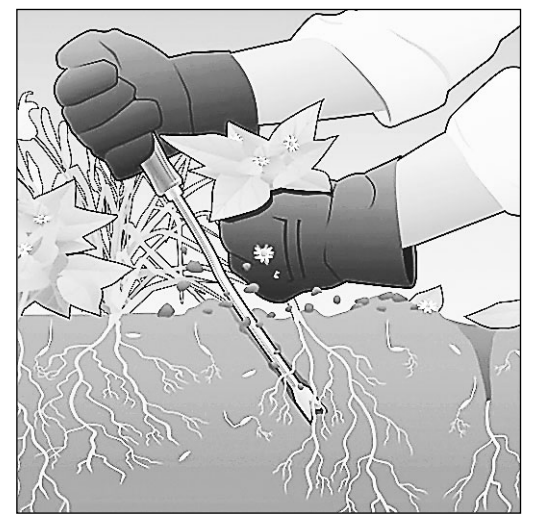
In the landscape it forms a sea of white making it unbeatable as a long-blooming groundcover. Since it is white it will complement whatever color you choose to partner it with. Be sure to give it room as it will spread 12 to 24 inches.

It should be obvious that in addition to the landscape, Snow Princess will dazzle everyone in mixed containers, falling over the edge like a blanket of snow. Plant it where you can enjoy its sweet honey aroma.

Snow Princess is different from other sweet alyssum or lobularia in that it is not as cold tolerant. It will be a perennial in zone 9 and higher but the rest of us will enjoy it as an annual that is the most prolific blooming groundcover in the market.

So from north to south, east to west and overseas Snow Princess has ranked at the top. Plant it when spring arrives and you'll see that it will do the same in your garden too!

*Norman Winter is executive director of The National Butterfly Center in Mission, Texas, and author of "Tough-as-Nails Flowers for the South" and "Captivating Combinations: Color and Style in the Garden." Contact him at: winter@naba.org*



## When You Weed, Get Deep Enough To Get The Roots

BY KATHY VAN MULLEKOM

Daily Press (Newport News, Va.) (© 2011 MCT)

The plants you call "weeds" are true survivors, thriving against all odds.

Most propagate by seed and the worst offenders can produce tens of thousands of seeds per plant, per season. Common lambsquarters ([http://www.ppws.vt.edu/scott/weed\\_id/cheal.htm](http://www.ppws.vt.edu/scott/weed_id/cheal.htm)), for instance, easily produces up to 70,000 seeds annually per plant, seeds that can last decades if left undisturbed below the soil surface.

Not all seeds sprout into weeds immediately, of course. Millions of them settle into the soil where they can wait years for a bit of sunlight to spark them into growth. Particularly pernicious are broadleaf perennial weeds, such as knotweed, purslane and thistle that propagate by seed and also vegetatively, regrowing from bits of the plant or root. If you chop up these types of weeds, you merely make more of them.

It is possible to win the war on weeds.

Prevention hinges on:

- Stopping current weeds from going to seed.
- Preventing future weed seeds from sprouting.

First, remove any existing weeds, including roots. Starting with this clean slate, add a layer of protective mulch to starve any just sprouted weeds of sunlight.

Next, apply a pre-emergent weed preventer such as Preen to prevent any existing weed seeds in the top layer of soil or mulch from forming roots.

Periodically, a few weeds will still crop up — remove them. Reapply weed preventer mid-season to keep seeds from the current year's weed crop from germinating, bearing in mind that many weeds set seed in late summer or fall. Refresh mulch as needed.

Each spring, as you start the process again, you'll find fewer and fewer weeds to deal with. Do a weekly weed patrol, enjoying your garden while you pluck any offenders. Following a simple seed-focused routine allows you to literally turn the corner on weeds.

# Angels And Blessings Await Your Garden

BY NORMAN WINTER

McClatchy Newspapers (©2011 MCT)

If I asked you to name me a flower that bloomed profusely with knock out color from June through September you would have been hard pressed to come up with a half dozen. But this is precisely how you would describe Blue Angel scaevola and the partnering white selection called White Blessing.

Despite the fact that the scaevola has been around now for more than a dozen years it is still not planted enough by the everyday gardener. Known botanically as Scaevola aemula, this Australian workhorse is a must for those hot summer flowerbeds where everything else starts to fade by mid-July.

Blue Angel and White Blessing are two relatively new scaevolias introduced by a company called Danziger. When I saw them in trials they were most impressive in the sheer quantity of flowers. Of course my visual analysis was a moment in time. I wondered how they performed for the rest of summer. The answer was they were dynamic through September.

The scaevola gets its name from the Roman hero Mucius Scaevola, who demonstrated unparalleled bravery (and questionable judgment) by burning off his own



MCT PHOTO

**Blue Angel and White Blessing are tough-as-nails, bloom all summer, type flowers native to Australia.**

leflhand, the blossoms do slightly resemble a human hand. But the common name, fan flower, is more descriptive of the small blossoms.

Scaevola does best given plenty of sun and planted in fertile, organic-rich, well-drained beds. Wet, soggy conditions are not satisfactory. Amend heavy soils or poorly drained locations by adding 3 to 4 inches of organic matter and tilling or shoveling to a depth of 6 to 8 inches. Plant scaevola at the same depth it is growing in the container, spacing the plants 12 to 18 inches

apart. Apply a layer of mulch after planting. Red mulch or fresh pine straw looks exceptional underneath the blue flowers.

They are very drought-tolerant once established in the landscape, but those in containers will need watering daily just like any other containers. Speaking of containers, the scaevola makes a fine addition to large mixed tubs. Feed scaevolias every four to six weeks with a light application of a 12-6-6 or balanced blend fertilizer.

In the landscape expect Blue

Angel and White Blessing to be groundcover-like or semi-trailing reaching 8 to 10 inches in height. They partner well together but there are some other real dazzling combinations to be made.

Consider use Blue Angel with orange lantanas. This will be a partnership that will last not only all summer but allow you to go on vacation and comeback with welcoming flowers in the landscape.

White Blessing is a little more upright and would make a nice partner with blue flowers like the spiky Victoria Blue salvia. But because it is white it will work with any other color you desire. For a tough-as-nails combination use White Blessing with Purple Heart (setcreasea) or Purple Knight alternanthera. Either one will look good all summer.

Blue Angel and White Blessing are also both candidates to be planted street side at the mailbox where reflective heat is coming off the pavement. There, either or both would look good with the mandevilla, America's favorite mailbox plant.

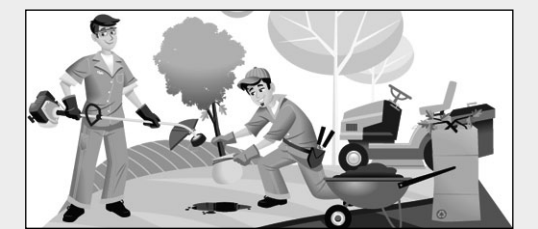
It feels like summer in my region so I promise spring is just around the corner. Check your garden center out for Blue Angel, White Blessing or one of several other great selections of the scaevola or fan flower. They will bloom all summer and you will be glad you did.

## What Grows Well Around Yankton

A free seminar on "What Grows Well Around Yankton" will be held at the Yankton County Extension Building, 901 Whiting Drive, at noon on Tuesday, April 26.

Stan Hoffart will lead a discussion and take questions.

For more information, contact Allen Sinclair at 605-665-6756 or visit [sinclair@valyousat.net](mailto:sinclair@valyousat.net).



# Tips To Grow On: Homegrown Food Is Safer, Cheaper And Pretty Easy

BY KATHY VAN MULLEKOM

Daily Press (Newport News, Va.)

Homegrown in the city can be as good as homegrown on the farm, especially when it comes from your own backyard garden.

There are several smart reasons to grow the produce that your household eats, even if you do it on a small scale.

When you grow what you eat, you know it's as fresh as fresh can be. No traveling hundreds of miles in trucks on a hot summer day.

You know it's safe to eat. No wondering what's been sprayed or not sprayed on the plants.

You save on your food bill, especially if you use share seeds and transplants with friends and family. No more fretting about the \$2.99 for one English cucumber or \$2 for one red pepper.

You also engage in an outdoor activity that enhances a healthier diet and lifestyle. No more just admiring gardens on HGTV while you sit on the sofa and munch a bunch of chips.

Creating a small backyard vegetable garden for planting warm-season crops in May and cool-season crops in fall and late winter is easier than ever before, thanks to ready-made raised garden kits that simplify design, digging and weed control. The kits, typically made from cedar or composite lumber, come in all sizes, shapes and price ranges, so it's hard to find any good excuse for not raising at least a few tomatoes for tasty BLTs.

Assembly is easy. Usually all you need is a screwdriver and hammer. Fill the frame with a vegetable-growing medium like soil mixed with compost and



PHOTO: GARDENER'S SUPPLY/MCT

**Forever Raised Beds look like aged cedar but are constructed of a composite material made from recycled plastic and reclaimed sawdust. Aluminum brackets reinforce the corners and keep the beds straight and true. Each 10-inch-deep bed provides ample root room for carrots, squash, potatoes and more.**

you're ready to plant. No drainage problems to worry about. No voles to fight. Even bunnies are less likely to hop over the boards to nibble. You can even set the gardens on concrete if your plants have shallow roots.

### TIPS TO GROW ON

Survey your soil. If you garden in the ground, the best soil is loam, which is soft, dark and crumbly. Loamy soil retains moisture but drains so it's not soggy; it's also easy to dig. If you encounter clay or sandy soil, amend the soil with aged com-

post or shredded hardwood mulch.

Size up your space. When plotting the size of your garden, make sure it's large enough to yield the harvest you want. Your plants should have room to mature and allow for good air circulation, which reduces pest and disease problems. If you have limited yard space, or none at all, grow vegetables and herbs in containers on a deck, terrace, balcony or even on the windowsill.

Let the sunshine in. Vegetable plants need plenty of sun — at least six hours a day.

Pick your plants for your plot. Grow vegetables that are expensive to buy in the grocery store or at the farmer's market, such as specialty tomatoes and peppers.

### PER PERSON PLANTS

Asparagus: 5-10 plants  
 Bush beans: 12-15 plants  
 Beets: 5-10 feet of plants, thin to 3 plants per foot  
 Cucumber: 1 vine, 2 bushes  
 Carrots: 4 feet, thin to 12 plants per foot  
 Corn: 10-15 plants,  
 Eggplant: 2-3 plants  
 Leaf lettuce: 8 feet, think to 3 plants per foot  
 Melon: 1-2 plants  
 Onion: 12-20 sets, 4 sets per foot  
 Peas: 15-20 plants, 6 plants per foot  
 Pepper: 3-5 plants  
 Potato: 10 plants  
 Spinach: 5-10 feet, 6 plants per foot  
 Squash: 1-2 plants  
 Tomato: 2-4 plants  
 Zucchini: 1-2 plants  
 Source: Bonnie Plants



COURTESY BONNIE PLANTS/MCT

**Raised vegetable beds become attractive parts of the landscape when bordered by blooming perennials and annuals.**

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