

GROWERTALKS

Culture Notes

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The Fairest Lobularia of Them All

Dr. Rick Schoellhorn



The challenge with new crops is not confusing them with their older counterparts. Snow Princess lobularia, launched this year at Pack Trials, is a big genetic leap forward in season extension, vigor, sterility and heat tolerance for alyssum. It will expand the use of this genus in baskets and mixed containers because most parts of the country can expect sustained performance—about six to eight weeks longer—compared with seed forms of alyssum. Snow Princess combines the seasonal performance we expect from a vegetative petunia with the fragrance and softness of alyssum. Growers and retailers who highlight these new attributes to consumers will add value to their sales.

Mix it up

In our trials and recipe building, we found that Snow Princess is best matched with high-vigor crops. Our most vigorous crops are Supertunia petunia, Illusion ipomoea and Luscious lantana—all of which would make great companion plants. If you're considering mixing Snow Princess with traditional spring annuals, make sure to use fewer pre-treated Snow Princess liners per mixed container and/or basket, or add liners into baskets after giving crops like calibrachoa and lobelia a chance to become established. This is a very quick-growing crop that could result in lucrative crop rotations! Snow Princess also makes a beautiful monoculture hanging baskets on its own.

Culture quick tips

Pinching/trimming. Like all members of this genus, if you end up with overgrown material you can always shear it back—Snow Princess will rebound just fine. Pinching and shearing shouldn't be necessary if you apply plant growth regulators, grow it cool and know the ultimate finished size of the plant you want.

High temperature production. General production temperatures are fine for Snow Princess; however, growers in the Deep South should move plants into outdoor production as soon as the danger of frost has passed. The higher light levels and reduced stress of outdoor growth will produce a higher quality plant. Also, temperatures up high in greenhouse rafters can reach over 90F (32C) in mid-spring and, though Snow Princess will continue to grow and flower, the quality of the plants will be reduced at elevated temperatures. In Florida trials, we've seen plants

continue to bloom in full sun with daytime highs in the 90s (30C) and night temperatures in mid 70s (21C), but cooler conditions definitely give a higher-quality plant.

Growth Regulators. Depending on your growing conditions, a Sumagic spray between 3 to 5 ppm two to three weeks after transplanting will help with growth control for 4-in. pots. In the landscape, a mature plant can reach 2.5 to 3 ft. across and 6 to 8 in. tall, continuing to grow and bloom until frost in most regions of the U.S. Like euphorbia Diamond Frost, Snow Princess makes a phenomenal mixer in containers and baskets—just make sure you combine it with plants of equal vigor.

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