Sweet William

Dianthus barbatus



Sweet William flowers
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Height: 12 inches

Spread: 12 inches

Spacing: 8 inches

Sunlight:

Hardiness Zone: 2

Description:

Tall stems with densely packed crimson colored, frilly flowers with white eyes rise above narrow green foliage during the late spring and into the fall; excellent addition to cottage gardens, beds, borders or containers

Ornamental Features

Sweet William has masses of beautiful fragrant crimson flat-top frilly flowers at the ends of the stems from late spring to early fall, which are most effective when planted in groupings. The flowers are excellent for cutting. Its pointy leaves remain emerald green in colour throughout the season.

Landscape Attributes

Sweet William is an herbaceous perennial with an upright spreading habit of growth. Its relatively fine texture sets it apart from other garden plants with less refined foliage.

This plant will require occasional maintenance and upkeep, and should only be pruned after flowering to avoid removing any of the current season's flowers. It is a good choice for attracting bees and butterflies to your yard, but is not particularly attractive to deer who tend to leave it alone in favor of tastier treats. Gardeners should be aware of the following characteristic(s) that may warrant special consideration;

- Self-Seeding

Sweet William is recommended for the following landscape applications;

- Mass Planting
- Rock/Alpine Gardens
- Border Edging
- General Garden Use
- Container Planting

Planting & Growing

Sweet William will grow to be about 12 inches tall at maturity, with a spread of 12 inches. When grown in masses or used as a bedding plant, individual plants should be spaced approximately 8 inches apart. Its foliage tends to remain dense right to the ground, not requiring facer plants in front. It grows at a medium rate, and tends to be biennial, meaning that it puts on vegetative growth the first year, flowers the second, and then dies. However, this species tends to self-seed and will thereby endure for years in the garden if allowed. As an herbaceous perennial, this plant will usually die back to the crown each winter, and will regrow from the base each spring. Be careful not to disturb the crown in late winter when it may not be readily seen!

This plant should only be grown in full sunlight. It prefers to grow in average to moist conditions, and shouldn't be allowed to dry out. It is not particular as to soil type or pH. It is highly tolerant of urban pollution and will even thrive in inner city environments. This species is not originally from North America. It can be propagated by division.

Sweet William is a fine choice for the garden, but it is also a good selection for planting in outdoor pots and containers. It is often used as a 'filler' in the 'spiller-thriller-filler' container combination, providing a mass of flowers against which the larger thriller plants stand out. Note that when growing plants in outdoor containers and baskets, they may require more frequent waterings than they would in the yard or garden. Be aware that in our climate, most plants cannot be expected to survive the winter if left in containers outdoors, and this plant is no exception. Contact our experts for more information on how to protect it over the winter months.