

Friday's Feature

By

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Angelonia, the summer snapdragon, provides reliable summer color

Summer snapdragon, *Angelonia angustifolia*, is one of the hottest new summer annuals on the market today. Landscape professionals and horticulturists are raving about its heat and drought tolerance, extended bloom period and performance in the landscape. Better Homes and Gardens magazine listed it as one of the Top 20 Annuals of 2008.

According to Bodie Pennisi, an Extension horticulturist with the University of Georgia College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, the flowers of summer snapdragon look a lot like those of its cousin, the winter snapdragon. However, summer snapdragon likes summer heat, not winter cold. Native to Mexico and the West Indies, summer snapdragon is best treated as an annual in all zones except zone 10 and 11.



Angelonia, the summer snapdragon, loves the heat. Don't confuse this plant with the winter snapdragons that perform best during cooler temperatures along the Gulf Coast

Plants have a bushy growth habit and reach about 18 to 24 inches tall. They are quite vigorous and may flop over in late summer. If this happens, cut them back to stimulate new growth and additional blooms in the fall.

Its flower spikes have about a dozen flowers, each approximately an inch across. They open in sequence from the bottom of the spike upward. The flowers hold up well in floral arrangements.

Summer snapdragons are available in a wide range of colors, including white, rose, lilac, violet, blue and many shades in between. Some cultivars have speckled or bicolor flowers. Flowering occurs over an eight to ten week period in summer, peaking in June and July.

Many cultivars are now available. 'Alba' is a white-flowering form, 'Blue Pacific' has blue and white flowers and 'Pandiana' has light pink flowers.



Carita White Angelonia

Several improved strains are now available. At around two feet tall, those known as Angelface are more upright, compact and produce lots of flower spikes in a variety of colors. Other strains currently available include the AngelMist series and Carita series. Both come in a wide selection of colors on vigorous, bushy plants that flower heavily. AngelMist cultivars produce larger flowers on compact plants around two feet tall, while cultivars in the Carita series generally are somewhat taller than other strains.

A new angelonia strain is Serena. Growing only 12 inches to 18 inches tall, Serena angelonias are among the most compact. The strain provides an excellent selection of colors, including Serena Lavender, Serena Lavender Pink, Serena White and Serena Purple.

Plant summer snapdragon in full sun and well-drained soil. Set plants approximately 12 inches apart. Or, grow them in patio containers. Summer snapdragons look particularly nice when grown with plants with gray leaves, like wormwood, silver plectranthus or lamb's ear.

A slow-release fertilizer incorporated into the soil at planting time will ensure uniform growth. Let the plants dry out between watering times, but be prepared to provide supplemental irrigation during dry spells.

Summer snapdragon can be grown from seed, summer tip cuttings or division of the root mass. Viruses have been a problem with the genus in the past, particularly in the bicolor forms. It's best to buy greenhouse grown material in the spring from reputable sources.



AngelMist Angelonia

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