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In the garden, heliotrope will bloom throughout the summer and if given cool nights (60°F) potted plants will bloom all winter long.

HELIOTROPE: NEW LIFE FOR AN OLD FAVORITE

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Are you looking for a new bedding plant to offer your customers? A plant that is easy to propagate and one that has few insect and disease problems? A plant with a pleasant fragrance that performs well as a garden border plant, in hanging baskets and as a flowering pot plant? Well look no further, an old favorite is back and gaining popularity.

Heliotrope (*Heliotropium arborescens*) is an old time favorite which recently has been gaining in popularity. The potential of this plant as an excellent garden annual for Minnesota was recognized as early as 1886 when the Minnesota Horticulture Society included heliotrope in its list of recommended garden annuals.

Description

H. arborescens, also called *H. corymbosum* or *H. peruvianum*, is native to Peru and has several related species that are native to the southern U.S. from southern Illinois to Delaware and south along the Atlantic coast to Florida.

Heliotrope has small, 1/4" long, 5 petaled flowers which are borne in a cyme (See Fig. 1). Flower colors are purple, violet and white. They have a strong fragrance which has been described using various analogies from vanilla, to sliced apples, to the aroma of a cherry pie fresh from the oven. It is the scent of the flowers that really makes this plant a winner.

The plant has a free branching habit and grows 12 to 18" tall, in northern climates. The leaves are medium green, 1 to 3" long, oblong-lanceolate or elliptic

with recessed venation. All plant parts are pubescent or hairy. Heliotrope is grown and used as an annual in Minnesota but in milder climates it grows as a perennial shrub reaching 4 feet in height.

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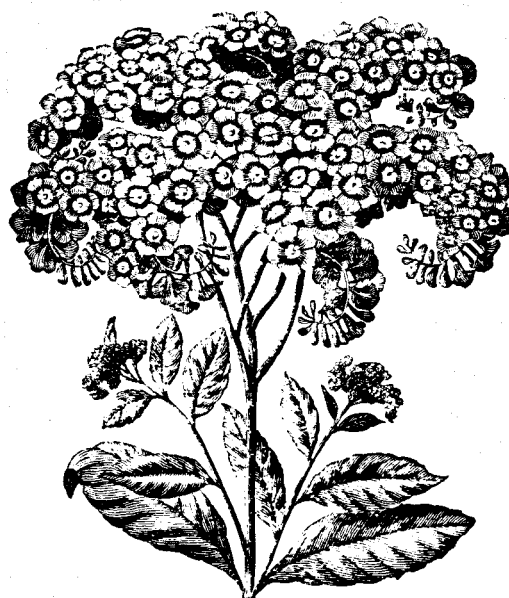


Figure 1. Figure of heliotrope.

Propagation

Heliotrope can be grown from seed or cuttings. The most common method for greenhouse production has been from cuttings to insure uniformity of plants and hasten time to flower.

Cutting Propagation

1. Tip or foot cuttings should be stuck in 1" cells of 50 plug trays.
2. Adequate rooting occurs without the use of rooting hormone.
3. Soil temperature during rooting should be 65-75°F. Air temperature should be 68-75°F).
4. Cuttings take 4 weeks to root.

Growing On

1. Transplant cuttings to 4" pots using a well-drained soil mix.
2. After transplanting, plants should be placed on a constant liquid feed program (200-0-200 ppm, N-P-K).
3. Plants should be kept on the dry side.
4. Pinch 1 week after transplanting if tip cuttings and 2 weeks after transplant if a foot cutting is used.
5. B-Nine at 3000 ppm is effective for height control.
6. Plants are ready for sale 6 weeks

after transplanting.

Problems

1. There are no major insect and disease problems reported for heliotrope.
2. Aphids can be a problem at times and if population levels get high, control is difficult because leaf and stem hairs impair pesticide contact with the pest.
3. Few flowers and rampant vegetative growth indicate that nitrogen levels are too high. Reducing the levels of N in your fertilizer program will prevent this problem.

Post-Production Handling

1. Sell plant in bloom to highlight the pleasant fragrance of the flowers.
2. Indoors, cool night temperatures (60°F) will promote continuous blooming.
3. Outdoors, plant in full sun or light shade and water only when rainfall is scarce.
4. Dead heading increases the number of blooms and extends the flowering season.

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Schedule

<u>Timing</u>	<u>Cultural Practice</u>	<u>Temperature</u>
	Stick unrooted cuttings	Soil: 65-75°F Air: 68-75°F
3-4 weeks	↓	
	Transplant	65°F
1-2 weeks	↓	
	Pinch	65°F
4-5 weeks	↓	
	Flower	