

If You Want Your Flowers to Pop, Plant Dusty Miller

Are you one of the many gardeners who will be buying trays of pansies and violas to incorporate into your annual beds? I suspect you are probably going to mix in the occasional ornamental kale and cabbage plants in those beds too as well. Consider adding Dusty Miller to the garden to make the annual colors pop. Dusty Miller is prized for its dazzling silver-felted leaves and fluffy appearance and is an exceptional companion plant for pansies and violas.

Dusty Miller is a tender perennial. It is usually treated as a hardy annual in the Mid-South but can be overwintered in zones five through eight with proper care. Dusty Miller is an easy annual to grow that enhances the color and beauty of most flowering companion plants. It is primarily grown for its frosted, silver-gray foliage and strong contrast in color and texture. The gray leaves make red and pink flowers appear sharper and they make blues look striking.

The leaves of the Dusty Miller are covered with fine matted hairs that give them a woolly-felted silver or white appearance. The white color is not as intense when grown in the shade. The coloration of the leaf can vary depending on the cultivar. The leaves are deeply cut and arranged alternately along a stiff, hairy stem.

The average size of Dusty Miller is eight to twelve inches tall and wide. After the first year small clusters of yellow flowers will develop. Enthusiasts often remove the flowers so as not to detract from the delightful foliage. There are cultivars that do not flower. This plant is also frost tolerant.

Be sure to plant Dusty Miller in light shade to full sun. It will flourish in well-drained soil that has been enriched with organic matter. If planting in containers please use a good quality potting mix. This plant has few pest problems.

Enhance the color of your annual flowers and plant Dusty Miller this season. I have had Dusty Miller in one of my flowerbeds now for almost three years. It really sets off my 'Purple Pixie' Loropetalum. I have even convinced my Dad to plant Dusty Miller in his fall/winter beds this year as well. He likes them and so will you!

Until next time, have a wonderful Thanksgiving holiday!