



Cooperative Extension Service
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

*Lobularia maritima*¹

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Introduction

Sweet Alyssum is an excellent, 6 to 10-inch-tall, low-growing plant useful for edging. The flowers are purple, white, or pink and the plants grow best in cool weather. Provide full sun and a well-drained soil. In July or August, when the plants are starting to go to seed in the north half of its range, they may be sheared back. They will usually be back in bloom in one to two-weeks. They perform best in the winter in USDA hardiness zones 9 and 10 in some shade but will “melt away” during the summer. The plants are smaller on sunny sites with poor soil.

General Information

Scientific name: *Lobularia maritima*

Pronunciation: lob-yoo-LAIR-ree-uh muh-RIT-tim-muh

Common name(s): Alyssum, Sweet Alyssum

Family: *Cruciferae*

Plant type: annual

USDA hardiness zones: all zones (Fig. 1)

Planting month for zone 7: Apr; May; Jun; Jul

Planting month for zone 8: Mar; Apr; May; Jun; Jul

Planting month for zone 9: Mar; Sep; Oct; Nov

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: Feb; Oct; Nov; Dec

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: container or above-ground planter; mass planting; attracts butterflies

Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

Description

Height: .5 to 1 feet

Spread: .5 to 1 feet

Plant habit: prostrate (flat); round

Plant density: dense

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: fine

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: oblong

Leaf venation: not applicable

Leaf type and persistence: not applicable

Leaf blade length: less than 2 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: not applicable

Fall characteristic: not applicable

Flower

Flower color: pink; white; purple

Flower characteristic: showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: no fruit

Fruit length: no fruit

Fruit cover: no fruit

Fruit color: not applicable

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Figure 1. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Fruit characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests

Trunk and Branches

- Trunk/bark/branches:** not applicable
- Current year stem/twig color:** green
- Current year stem/twig thickness:** thin

Use and Management

The seed germinates in 8 to 15 days at temperatures between 65 to 75-degrees F. Do not cover the seed as light is necessary for germination. Sweet Alyssum damps off easily.

There are a number of cultivars available at nurseries for different flower color.

Culture

- Light requirement:** plant grows in part shade/part sun
- Soil tolerances:** clay; sand; acidic; loam
- Drought tolerance:**
- Soil salt tolerances:** unknown
- Plant spacing:** 6 to 12 inches

Pests and Diseases

Downy mildew causes leaf lesions that are light green then yellow. A downy growth forms on both sides of the leaves in the yellow zone. Warm days and cool nights favor the disease.

Other

- Roots:** not applicable
- Winter interest:** not applicable
- Outstanding plant:** not particularly outstanding
- Invasive potential:** not known to be invasive

A wilt disease attacks the stems during wet weather and a cobwebby growth may develop. Parts of the plant above the infection wilt and die. The lower leaves rot, shrink, and shrivel.

White rust causes pale yellow leaf lesions. The underside of the leaves have smooth white pustules. Infected stems and flowers are seriously deformed.

Club root causes deformation and lack of development of infected roots. Infected plants may wilt on hot days but recover at night. Avoid planting in soil where club root has been a problem.

Powdery mildew causes a white coating on the leaves.