**Lobularia maritima**

Edward F. Gilman, Teresa Howe

### 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

---

1. This document is Fact Sheet FPS-352, one of a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: October, 1999 Please visit the EDIS Web site at http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu.

2. Edward F. Gilman, professor, Environmental Horticulture Department, Teresa Howe, coordinator - Research Programs/Services, Gulf Coast REC, Bradenton, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, 32611.
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

**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

**Other**

**Roots:** not applicable

**Winter interest:** not applicable

**Outstanding plant:** not particularly outstanding

**Invasive potential:** not known to be invasive

**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.

**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.

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.