Thunbergia grandiflora

Edward F. Gilman

Introduction

From early summer until late winter this vigorously twining vine bears hanging clusters of large, lavender-blue flowers that are 3 inches in diameter (Fig. 1). These flowers are bell-shaped and have a white throat. The broad, heart-shaped leaves of the Sky Flower are soft and dark green. The fruits are inconspicuous seed capsules.

General Information

Scientific name: Thunbergia grandiflora
Pronunciation: thun-BER-jee-uh gran-diff-FLOR-ruh
Common name(s): Bengal Clock Vine, Sky Vine
Family: Acanthaceae
Plant type: vine
USDA hardiness zones: 9B through 11 (Fig. 2)
Planting month for zone 8: year round
Planting month for zone 9: year round
Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round
Origin: not native to North America
Uses: cascading down a wall; container or above-ground planter
Availability: grown in small quantities by a small number of nurseries

Description

Height: depends upon supporting structure
Spread: depends upon supporting structure
Plant habit: spreading
Plant density: moderate

Growth rate: fast
Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: undulate
Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Leaf shape: deltoid; saggitate (arrow); ovate
Leaf venation: pinnate
Leaf type and persistence: evergreen
Leaf blade length: less than 2 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: no fall color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Leaf venation: pinnate

Flower
Flower color: lavender-blue
Flower characteristic: summer flowering; fall flowering; winter flowering

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Trunk and Branches
Trunk/bark/branches: typically multi-trunked or clumping stems
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Culture
Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun
Soil tolerances: acidic; alkaline; sand; loam; clay
Drought tolerance: moderate
Soil salt tolerances: unknown
Plant spacing: 36 to 60 inches

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Winter interest: plant has winter interest due to unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter trunk, or winter flowers
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Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests

**Use and Management**

Sky Flower has a very rampant growth habit and is great for the quick covering of arbors, trellises and fences. It can be successfully used as a screen or container plant and is marvelous cascading over a wall.

This plant does its best in rich, sterilized top-soil with good drainage. It prefers full sun to partial shade and a generous watering regime. Regular pruning is required to keep this plant in bounds. The nice flowers make it well worth this effort.

Sky Flower is propagated by layers or cuttings.

**Pests and Diseases**

The root-knot nematode is frequently a pest of Sky Flower.