

Sweet Alyssum

GENERAL

Origin	: Mediterranean, temperate
Vigour	: fast growing
Humidity	: semi-arid, semi-humid
Propagation	: sowing and pricking out
Maintenance	: moderate

CONDITIONS

Urban climate	: resistant
Dessication	: vulnerable
Stagnant water	: vulnerable
Irrigation	: high
Salinity/ppm	: high (3500 ppm)
Hardiness	: -3°C

SHAPE

Type	: annual, perennial
Height	: 0.05 m-0.15 m
Spread	: 0.15 m-0.3 m
Foliage	: evergreen

FLOWER

Colour	: white, lilac, violet
Period	: January - May
Smell	: scented, strong, gives freely of its scent, flower, sweet

FRUIT

Type of fruit	: silique
Fruit size	: 0.3 cm

Sweet Alyssum is a short-lived perennial native to the Mediterranean Basin and the Canary Islands. The generic name refers to the small seedpods, while *maritima* shows its preference for a maritime climate. It grows about 15 cm high forming lacy mats some 30 cm across. The lanceolate leaves are evergreen making the background for protruding terminal clusters of white inflorescences. They have four petals, as typical for the mustard family. Cultivars often produce flowers in lilac or violet for a long period of time. The flowers emit a very pleasant scent which attracts insects. After flowering, the plants should be cut back to restart their floral display. In containers, they make an impressive effect, spilling over the rim. They may be used for massed planting or edging and can cover empty ground wherever there is enough light. They tolerate full or partial sun and demand a well-drained soil. Other than these, the reliable Sweet Alyssum has no further particular requirements. Heat is tolerated, as are low temperatures, and irrigation may be done with some level of salt. The plant thrives even in crevices, still producing flowers in abundance. However, it also responds well to frequent watering and fertilising with slow-release granules. Sowing on site is possible in autumn, but more often plants are started in pots. After transplanting, it should be given some attention until it becomes established. In suitable locations, it may self-seed. It is most often seen in Arriyadh as part of a winter colour display on road verges.

