



WHITE FOLIAGE

White Foliage: Its unique, pristine beauty stands alone or in contrast in the garden



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Ever since I began growing plants, first as a college student crowding my apartments with pots of blooms and then later with my own outdoor gardens, I always tended towards what my mother, who grew pale-tinted roses, termed vulgar colors—the brightest, biggest and boldest of all. And while I still tend to be brazen in planning my garden's palate, I now have created an area for whites and have learned to

appreciate their much more subtle beauty.

"I have a favorite white flower, the tried and true Shasta Daisy," says Suzanna Tudor, a member of the Porter County Master Gardener Association (PCMGA). "I purchased the one I have seven years ago at Home Depot, and it is still awesome and growing.

Chrysanthemum 'Becky' was the PPA Perennial Plant of the Year 2003, living up to its tag verbiage, "large white daisies with yellow centers bloom in June and July over dark green shiny foliage." This little beauty began as a tiny, foot-high sprout to what it is today. Gardeners will want to allow plenty of space for Miss Becky."

Tudor also has another favorite--a newly acquired Dahlia which she describes as an amazing plant, but one that requires a bit of fuss in our planting zone 5 or 6, depending on where you live. According to Tudor, with dahlias, gardeners need to dig up the tubers, the root portion, in the fall and keep them in a cool dry place during the winter. Soil needs to be warm before planting in the spring.

"I got a jump start on the season by potting them early in the house and setting out once the weather warmed," she says. "Thus, my payoff: an early bloom. Dahlias are stars of the show in the garden when other perennials and annuals have seen better days."

Kathy Van Arsdel, Publicity and Promotions Committee Chairperson for the Porter County Master Gardeners Association, who was planning on creating a white garden this year but got sidetracked by winter damage, offers suggestions about how to keep whites interesting by adding different heights and textures.

Also, Van Arsdel points out that since many white flowers aren't true white – meaning they

often contain pigments of other colors such as pink, blue and green – plants with silver and gray foliage can bounce those hints of colors across their foliage, helping a slightly off-white garden look more uniform.

A good way to start is by planting white annuals in several medium to large pots and placing them in locations you think might work. If that doesn't give you the desired look, you can move the pots to another area and see if you that is more of the design you're trying to achieve.

Van Arsdel adds that white flowers and light colored or silver foliage pick up light even as night advances, remaining more visible than other colorful blooms. Therefore, planting them near patios, porches and lights enhances the enjoyment.

Adding white stones and structures such as bird baths and houses and chimes also adds to the impact of a white garden with differing elements. Also, Van Arsdel notes that if you want just a little more hint of color, consider planting a backdrop of low-in-height light hued conifers--chartreuse for a golden glow and blue for a silver glow. Vining plants, whether on a trellis climbing up or spilling down over a pathway and rocks provides another layer of texture and height.

“One of the most important thing to remember when planting a white garden,” she says, “is that after finding the right location, envelope yourself in a palette of white and near-white and then plant en masse.”

Sidebar: White Blooms and Foliage

For white blooms consider the following:

Daffodils

Tulips

Hyacinth

Phlox paniculata David

Liatris

Azalea

Sweet alyssum

Yarrow

Queen Anne's Lace

Astilbe

Shasta daisy

Candytuft

Petunias

Nicotiana

Iris

Rose

Primrose (night blooming)

Moonflower

Casablanca lily

Peonies

Angelonium

Hydrangea

Viburnum

For white/whitish foliage, here are some plants to get you started:

Dusty miller

Artemisia

Lavender

Ornamental curry

Caladium (make sure they are sun-tolerant)

Variegated shrubs (i.e. dogwood)

Viburnum