Sweetleaf

Stevia rebaudiana

Height: 3 feet

Spread: 3 feet

Sunlight: ○ ◐

Hardiness Zone: (annual)

Other Names: Sweet Leaf, Sugarleaf, Honey Leaf, Sweet Herb

Description:

A sub-tropical, spindly, and many branched plant producing small clusters of tubular white flowers nearly year round; the leaves are not aromatic but possess a natural sweetness when tasted; water frequently when plants are young



Sweetleaf foliage
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Ornamental Features

Sweetleaf is primarily valued in the garden for its ornamental upright and spreading habit of growth. It features dainty clusters of lightly-scented white flowers at the ends of the stems from early spring to late fall. Its serrated oval leaves remain forest green in color throughout the season.



Sweetleaf flowers
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Landscape Attributes

Sweetleaf is an herbaceous annual with an upright spreading habit of growth. Its wonderfully bold, coarse texture can be very effective in a balanced garden composition.

This is a relatively low maintenance plant, and is best cleaned up in early spring before it resumes active growth for the season. It is a good choice for attracting butterflies to your yard. It has no significant negative characteristics.

Sweetleaf is recommended for the following landscape applications;

- Mass Planting
- General Garden Use
- Container Planting

Planting & Growing

Sweetleaf will grow to be about 3 feet tall at maturity, with a spread of 3 feet. It tends to be leggy, with a typical clearance of 1 foot from the ground, and should be underplanted with lower-growing perennials. Although it's not a true annual, this plant can be expected to behave as an annual in our climate if left outdoors over the winter, usually needing replacement the following year. As such, gardeners should take into consideration that it will perform differently than it would in its native habitat.

This plant does best in full sun to partial shade. It prefers to grow in average to moist conditions, and shouldn't be allowed to dry out. It is particular about its soil conditions, with a strong preference for poor, acidic soils. It is somewhat tolerant of urban pollution. This species is not originally from North America. It can be propagated by division.

Sweetleaf is a fine choice for the garden, but it is also a good selection for planting in outdoor pots and containers. With its upright habit of growth, it is best suited for use as a 'thriller' in the 'spiller-thriller-filler' container combination; plant it near the center of the pot, surrounded by smaller plants and those that spill over the edges. It is even sizeable enough that it can be grown alone in a suitable container. Note that when growing plants in outdoor containers and baskets, they may require more frequent waterings than they would in the yard or garden.