

GEORGIA
GOLD
 MEDAL
 PLANTS

SUMMER ANNUAL

Spider Flower

Cleome
Señorita
Rosalita[®]
 and *Señorita*
Blanca[™]

Full sun



HERBACEOUS PERENNIAL

**Red Hot Poker,
 Torch Lily**
Kniphofia
hybrids

Full sun
 Zones 6-9



Cleome is a passalong plant that brings back summer memories of gardens and gardeners. But as charming as our memories are, old-fashioned Cleome is not without faults. Recently though, two Cleomes have been introduced to provide all the positives of this familiar flower while breeding out all of the negatives. What treasures have resulted!

Cleome *Señorita Rosalita*[®] and *Señorita Blanca*[™] offers a bushier form, no spines, no seed pods, a tough constitution that can take hot summers, drought tolerance, and foliage that stays on the plant throughout the season. What is kept is the charming, airy flower form on an upright plant that stands tall in a flower border. Butterflies and hummingbirds flock to these flowers.

This annual has smaller blooms than old-fashioned Cleome, but the abundance of blooms more than makes up for the size. The blooms on *Señorita Rosalita*[®] are lavender-pink; *Señorita Blanca*[™] is white with a lavender blush. Both bloom throughout the summer. Both are smaller in stature too, maturing at two to four feet. Although both have won many, many awards, the brighter *Señorita Rosalita*[®] is the crowd-pleaser.

Plant these in a sunny border after the soil warms in spring. This plant prefers average moisture and good drainage and is pretty drought resistant. One thing it cannot handle is wet soil. Plant it among other annuals as a vertical statement or mass several to add long-lasting color that is in proportion to a grander landscape.

**2014
 WINNERS**

Tall spires of Red Hot Poker blooms in shades and combinations of red, orange, yellow and cream are dramatic in gardens and flower arrangements. The blooms are actually many tubular flowers on strong stems that open from the bottom up above sword-like or grass-like foliage. As the blooms open, the lower flowers change color, often creating a two-toned effect that is beautiful towering

above annuals and other perennials. They may rebloom if you cut spent flowers after blooming.

Red Hot Poker is native to Africa and usually ever-green. Many gardeners will tie up the foliage in winter to create a neat effect and protect the crown, then cut the foliage back to about three inches in spring to make room for new growth. The dramatic foliage and flowers can have a tropical effect.

Expect this plant to start blooming in June. Hummingbirds flock to the blooms, as do butterflies and bees, but deer avoid Red Hot Poker. When in bloom, these plants range from 18" tall to the 60-84" tall 'Lola'. Popular new varieties include the Popsicle[™] Series: more compact, all-summer bloomers from 18" to 30" tall. These smaller varieties work well in sunny containers.

To make these plants happy, give them plenty of sun and good drainage. They have rhizomatous root systems, like bearded iris and ginger, so the plants will spread over time. The fleshy roots will rot in wet soil. Red Hot Pokers are easy to divide in spring to create more plants.

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EVERGREEN SHRUB

Sweet Box

*Sarcococca
confusa*

Shade

Zones 6-9



Sweet Box is the ultimate performer for the winter garden, with glossy evergreen foliage and fragrance on a shrub that slowly grows to three to five feet high and wide. This native of China is related to Boxwood, but with a looser, more relaxed form. It is used as low hedging and can be shaped, but its pliable branches form a beautiful, arching form. It rarely needs pruning, but doing so in late winter will result in new growth and a denser mass of foliage.

Sweet Box's small, deep green leaves are a perfect background for colorful coral bells and vivid spring bulbs – or plant a few in front of Annabelle Hydrangeas to help support floppy stems. Sweet Box is also an excellent, deer-resistant choice for a shady bank or woodland landscape. Sweet Box can handle dark shade under eaves or trees. Once established, it is drought tolerant, but this plant much prefers moist, well-drained soil.

In January and February tiny white blooms hide along the branches, but the sweet fragrance does not hide. Combine this fragrance with glossy-green evergreen foliage and you have a star performer for the winter garden.

Dwarf Sweet Box (*Sarcococca hookeriana* var. *humilis*) also offers fragrant winter flowers, evergreen foliage, shade tolerance and deer resistance, but in a plant that stays about 12-18" tall and spreads by suckering to form a very dense evergreen groundcover.

DECIDUOUS TREE

Chinese Pistache

*Pistacia
chinensis*

Sun

Zones 6b-9



Chinese Pistache is a useful shade tree that can take heat, poor soil and drought. Maturing at about 35' tall, this is a good, medium-sized tree with an upright form and a dense, uniform canopy. It can tolerate some shade, but its oval form and fall colors are showier in full sun. Young trees need pruning to create their best shape, so closely examine the structure of the tree or buy a larger tree for the best investment for a home landscape. If you buy the tree in late fall, you can also select the best fall color, since there is a color variation among seedlings. Fall to late win-

ter is also the best time for planting trees in Georgia.

Chinese Pistache grows two to three feet per year. It has a reputation of looking lanky when young, but gets more and more attractive with age, eventually spreading much wider than it is tall. It is tolerant of many soil types, but not boggy soil. Chinese Pistache is tough enough to be used in urban parking lots, coastal landscapes, and the challenging environment surrounding new home sites.

What looks like a leaf on this tree is actually a leaflet. Each compound leaf is made up of about a dozen leaflets, creating a unique look, fine to medium texture, and lighter shade. That foliage becomes stunning in late fall, when the leaves turn orange and red. Once the leaves fall, the vase shape and peeling bark provide winter interest.

Clusters of small flowers appear in spring. Female plants do produce colorful fruit (which can become a litter problem), but the fruit is inedible to humans. The pistachios in our grocery stores come from a different species of *Pistacia*.

NATIVE PLANT

Atamasco Lily, Rain Lily

*Zephyranthes
atamasca*

Sun

Zones 7-10



There are about 70 *Zephyranthes* species that are native to North, Central and South America. Atamasco Lily, one of the hardiest, is native throughout Georgia. It is found in moist forests, bottomlands, seepy areas around rock outcrops, wet pastures, and roadsides. Give it moisture and full sun and it will fit nicely into the home landscape. The fragrant blooms are white, aging to pink. The blooms are two to four inches across, on a stalk four to twelve inches tall, rising above soft, glossy, grass-like leaves six to eighteen inches long. The show of flowers rise above the grass in March and April, always as a sweet surprise after a rain. Only a real rain will coax it into blooming, which is why it is called Rain Lily.

This bulb is usually sold as a container plant, but can also be purchased as a dry bulb and planted in spring or fall. Atamasco Lily will form colonies.

All parts of Atamasco Lily are poisonous if eaten, causing dizziness, collapsing, or stomach pain.

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The Georgia Gold Medal program is based at the State Botanical Garden of Georgia.

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