



Lobularia 'Snow Princess'

A sweet alyssum that outpaces all the others

Jimmy Turner

AT A GLANCE

- Latin name:** *Lobularia* hybrid 'Snow Princess'
- Common name:** Hybrid sweet alyssum
- Flowers:** Clusters of small white flowers
- Foliage:** Mounding and trailing
- Mature height:** Hangs or spreads 2 to 3 ft.
- Hardiness:** Annual to Zone 9
- Soil:** Well-drained
- Exposure:** Full sun to later afternoon shade
- Water usage:** High
- Sources:** Local nurseries

Lobularia 'Snow Princess' doesn't die in the heat and never sets seed, so it will flower continually.

Every so often a new plant comes along that completely surprises me, and this one really surprised me. What could possibly be new about alyssum? Well, this isn't like any sweet alyssum you've ever grown. Think of it more like alyssum crossed with kudzu; this plant really GROWS! Unlike other varieties, 'Snow Princess' will hang in a basket as much as 3 to 4 feet (yes, feet), and if planted in the ground, it will easily spread 3 to 4 feet across. 'Snow Princess' is also a sterile hybrid, so it never sets seed; therefore, it flowers constantly.

It doesn't die in the heat either! We planted it in the trial garden at the Dallas Arboretum in full Texas sun, both in the ground and in containers. I was certain that last year's torrential rains followed by our infernal heat would wipe it out,





Lobularia 'Snow Princess' blooms continually in large mounds, often 3 to 4 feet tall or wide.

but 'Snow Princess' not only survived, it thrived. As our Trial Motto says, "If we can't kill it, no one can!" and we threw this plant everything a Texas summer has to offer — heat, humidity, drought, flood, and never-ending sunshine.

Like all royalty, 'Snow Princess' doesn't like to share her spotlight, so be careful when combining it with similar-sized or less-vigorous plants. She'll outshine them and smother them. Personally I think this alyssum is best planted either by itself in containers to show off its spreading habit or as the "spreader" in large combina-

tion pots. 'Snow Princess' is incredible in hanging baskets or large pots, where it will form large balls of pure white flowers. One of my favorite container combinations last year used *Cyperus papyrus* 'King Tut' as an upright accent in a large container with 'Snow Princess' planted around the perimeter. I have to admit I borrowed the idea from someone else, but that's what gardening is all about! 'Snow Princess' is incredibly scented, too, so place plants where the fragrance can be enjoyed. One thing I've learned to avoid with this plant is not to use a small pot; anything smaller



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than a 12-inch basket or a 2-gallon-sized container will require you to water several times per day.

'Snow Princess' is easy to care for — just water regularly and provide a balanced periodic fertilizer. Since the plant is such a heavy grower, I recommend using a liquid feeding at each watering. Full sun in early spring is preferred, but as temperatures warm up, a little late afternoon shade will be appreciated. This new variety has impressed me with surviving our summer climate, but I'm still not sure of its winter hardiness. It's listed as cold-hardy to 32 degrees, but I think it would survive slightly colder. I'd recommend covering the plants in fall to extend their time in the garden, but I don't expect them to be cold-hardy much below the upper 20s (like the other alyssums).

When shopping for 'Snow Princess', you should be able to find it in 5-inch, quart-sized containers up to hanging-basket-sized plants; this isn't the type of alyssum you'll find in 4-inch pots or 6 packs. Since this plant is grown only from cuttings, it will be more expensive than other sweet alyssums, but it is a totally different plant and absolutely worth it!

Even though I've trialed this variety for only a short period, I'm already looking for new ways and new places to use it in the garden. Join me this year in seeing how it does. ★

***About the author:** Jimmy Turner is senior director of gardens at the Dallas Arboretum and a contributing editor to this publication. Visit www.dallasplanttrials.org for more information on his trials.*

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