

# MESSENGER-INQUIRER

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I'm dreaming of a white summer. No, not snow, but plants with white flowers. White flowers draw attention to themselves and are easily seen during the evening the way moonlight glistens off newly fallen snow. With busy hectic schedules, the only time to enjoy the garden flowers on the deck is in the evening. It is not hard to mix white into a container or flower borer since it combines with most of the other colors. Several annuals and perennials with white flowers fit well into the landscape to extend the enjoyment of flowers into the evening.

The moon vine (*Ipomoea alba*) has the unique characteristic of beginning to open its white blossoms in late afternoon to early evening. Mom and dad love to look out their patio door and count the flowers coving their trellised vine. The impressive white trumpet-like flowers open 5 to 6 inches wide. I make sure to plant them where I walk by them in the evening. The fragrant flowers are open for only one night, but the vine is always covered with them. The attractive heart-shaped, green leaves are 4 to 6 inches long. Plant seeds outside as soon as the threat of frost has passed in the spring or start them indoors earlier to maximize the length of time flowers are produced. This tender, tropical perennial is an annual in our zone since it is killed by freezing temperatures. Moon vine prefers full sun and well-drained soil. It blooms in summer to late summer.

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A variety of petunias (*Petunia*) are available with different characteristics and white flowers. Some cultivars perform better in pots and others in the ground. In general, petunias need full sun and well-drained soil. The white flowers of the different cultivars may range from 2 to 4 inches in diameter. The height of the plant, depending on the petunia, ranges from 7 to 20 inches.

A plant that works well as a filler in hanging baskets and pots with season-long bloom is *Calibrachoa*, which is also known by a common name of million bells. It is covered with what seems like a million little petunia-like flowers that may reach over 1 inch wide. This plant is available in a wide range of colors including white. Plant height may reach 6 to 10 inches tall depending on the cultivar. It prefers to grow in well-drained soil and full sun.

For hot, dry growing conditions, periwinkle or vinca (*Catharanthus roseus*) is an annual available with white flowers. In addition, you can find blossoms with white petals and an eye of another color to coordinate with the color in other flowers. Depending on the cultivar, the flower size may reach 2 inches across. The plant height ranges from 12 to 14 inches. Periwinkle grows in full sun and prefers well-drained soil. It can grow in containers or in the ground.

*Fan flower* (*Scaevola* hybrid) is what I consider a tough plant that thrives in a hot, humid climate and can withstand wind. The common flower color is violet, but it is also available in white. The fan-shaped flower blooms throughout the summer. The unique bloom looks very nice in hanging baskets or window boxes.

Summer snapdragon (*Angelonia angustifolia*) prefers to grow in full sun and well-drained soil. It tolerates the heat of summer. Cultivars are available with white flowers. The 1-inch

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flowers are produced on spikes. The plant height ranges from 12 to 24 inches tall, depending on the cultivar.

Wax or fibrous-rooted begonia (*Begonia x semperflorens-cultorum*) is a popular annual used in shady locations. The flowers of wax begonia range in size from 0.75 to 2 inches across. The plant height ranges from 8 to 12 inches.

The foliage color of the wax begonia is available in bronze or green. White flowers are available in both leaf colors. The green-leaved begonias prefer shade and will tolerate a couple hours of morning sun. The bronze-leaved begonias will handle shade, partial shade, and full sun conditions. The bronze foliage makes wax begonia a versatile plant.

Zinnias (*Zinnia*) with white flowers are available and easy to grow from seed planted directly in the garden. Look for powdery mildew resistant types. Some of the landscape zinnias have small 1-to-2-inch flowers and some are 5 to 6 inches across.

Tall phlox 'David' (*Phlox paniculata* 'David') is a perennial plant with fragrant, white flower panicles 6 to 9 inches long and 6 to 8 inches wide. The individual florets are 1 inch across. 'David' blooms in the summer and is fragrant. The plant grows 36 to 40 inches tall. This garden classic is mildew resistant but needs good air circulation and plenty of moisture. When grown in average soil, it does not need to be staked. A location with full sun and well-drained soil is best.

'PowWow White' coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea* 'PowWow White') has 3- to 4-inch white flowers, with arching petals pointing to the ground, surrounding a light brown cone of seeds. This plant, including the flower stem, reaches 2 to 3 feet tall and spreads 1 to 1.5 feet

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wide. This perennial can be planted in full sun or partial shade in well-drained soil. Coneflowers tolerate drought conditions.

For more information about plants with white flowers, contact the Daviess County Cooperative Extension Service at (270) 685-8480 or [Annette.heisdorffer@uky.edu](mailto:Annette.heisdorffer@uky.edu).

## **Annette's Tips:**

If you have leftover spring-flowering bulbs that have not been planted, go ahead and plant them. They may not flower as well, but the bulbs will not dry out and die.

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