

## **Add amsonia to your perennial wish list**

New perennials are introduced every year to tickle the fancy of gardeners, and we can't wait to plant them. In the winter, we read garden magazines, the Home & Garden section of our local newspapers, and newsletters from our favorite garden centers with pen and wish list in hand.

Garden dreams help gardeners make it through long, cold winters. But while we are busy searching out the newest plants, there are dependable perennials that deserve a place on our wish lists, too.

*Amsonia tabernaemontana*, commonly called willow leaf amsonia, is a generous-sized perennial that grows up to three feet tall and wide, even taller in moist locations. It prefers to grow in full sun or light shade in average, well-drained soil. In sites too shady for their liking, plants will have to be cut back by one third after flowering to maintain their upright form and prevent flopping.

Steel blue flower clusters charm the garden in late spring and early summer. Flowering is most abundant in full sun. Willow-like leaves remain fresh and attractive all summer before they glow a gorgeous golden yellow in fall.

Willow leaf amsonia is lovely planted among wildflowers in prairie plantings, in perennial gardens and mixed borders. It rarely needs division, is not appetizing to deer, and seldom suffers from disease or insect problems. The American Horticultural Society chose *Amsonia tabernaemontana* as one of the 75 Great Plants for American Gardens.

*Amsonia hubrichtii*, commonly referred to as Arkansas blue star, sports thread-like foliage giving the plant an overall soft, feathery appearance. The bright green foliage turns brilliant yellow in fall.

Just a bit smaller than willow leaf amsonia, it also prefers to grow in full sun or light shade in average, well-drained soil. Icy blue flowers appear at the tops of stems in late spring and early summer.

Plant Arkansas blue star in cottage gardens, perennial beds and mixed borders. If you have the room, it is gorgeous planted in large drifts. Partner it with alliums, upright ornamental grasses, and fall-blooming perennials.

*Amsonia hubrichtii* was named the 2011 Plant of the Year by the Perennial Plant Association because it is adaptable and easy to grow, long-lived and reliable, and has no serious insect and disease troubles. It does require a little patience, however. Until it establishes, the plant can look a little less than impressive. Once it matures, it will reward your patience for many years to come.

Both varieties of amsonia die back to the ground at the end of the year, but behave more like shrubs during the growing season. Their dense, upright and rounded shape and considerable size

are similar to small shrubs. *Amsonia tabernaemontana* offers bold texture to garden designs. *Amsonia hubrichtii* adds fine texture to planting schemes.

Have fun filling up wish lists with new plants promised for 2017, but don't forget about the tried and true. They have earned a spot in your landscape, too.

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