



garden spot

Heliotrope can bloom everywhere



MARTY FIGLEY

The dark violet-purple blooms of heliotrope, *Heliotropium arborescens*, graced many gardens this year and added a sweet fragrance as well. The plants were used in borders and as specimens, growing from one to three feet tall, and were quite beautiful. They would be just as home in window boxes and they make beautiful bouquets.

Discovered in Peru in the 1700s by a joint French and Spanish expedition, heliotrope's penetrating fragrance soon became a favorite of florists and perfumers. The rich colors of the blooms blended perfectly with the fashionable colors worn by Victorians so that everything "matched."

As the bloom begins, fluffy clusters of deep lavender-blue appear, then change

to violet, then pinky-violet to violet-white as they mature. Some plants have white blooms.

In our climate, heliotrope is grown as a tender annual and seeds can be started indoors in March, then set into the garden in May. Place them 10 to 12 inches apart in a sunny area and when they are four to five inches high, pinch them back so they will be full and bushy.

They appreciate a light, rich loam in soil that has been worked to a depth of the spade. They do like to be kept moist all the time and fertilized regularly, and they will reward with bloom all summer, although the bloom may slow down in high heat. But, when fall arrives with cooler weather, they again will add color to the garden.

You may find heliotrope in pots at florists this time of year and it can be kept indoors in a cool room or greenhouse during the winter months. You may wish to pot up a plant from the garden to carry over. If so, use a standard soil mix with double the amount of peat

and good rich compost or rotted manure. As with most flowering plants, they need lots of light.

In the greenhouse, train the plant to a standard form by pruning off side shoots and fertilize regularly.

The most common species of heliotrope is *arborescens*. "Marine," with a more compact growth habit, has deep-purple, very fragrant flowers, and "Dwarf Marine" is smaller still.

These plants, outdoors, are generally free of insect pests, but may be bothered by aphids and red-spider mites indoors so keep a watchful eye. Look for seeds of this lovely flower to start indoors this winter, or buy plants next spring. Schedule a place in your garden so that you, too, can enjoy it.

I have no idea why, but heliotrope's nickname is cherry pie!

Another annual flower that is gaining in popularity is *Cosmos*, *Cosmos bipinnatus*, and the derivation of its name is from the Greek *kosmos*, which means beautiful. *Cosmos* is the same in singu-



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Heliotrope: Heliotrope adds beauty and sweet fragrance to the garden.

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