Vanilla Spice® Summersweet

Clethra alnifolia 'Caleb'

Vanilla Spice Summersweet in bloom
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Height: 5 feet

Spread: 5 feet

Sunlight: ○ ◐

Hardiness Zone: 4

Other Names: Sweet Pepperbush

Description:

One of the most fragrant of all garden shrubs with showy spikes of sweetly scented white flowers; blooms in late summer when little else is in flower; a very hardy variety, neat, tidy habit of growth and good fall color; needs moist acidic soil

Ornamental Features

Vanilla Spice Summersweet has masses of beautiful spikes of fragrant white flowers rising above the foliage from mid to late summer, which are most effective when planted in groupings. It has green deciduous foliage. The glossy round leaves turn an outstanding yellow in the fall.

Vanilla Spice Summersweet flowers
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Landscape Attributes

Vanilla Spice Summersweet is a multi-stemmed deciduous shrub with a shapely oval form. Its average texture blends into the landscape, but can be balanced by one or two finer or coarser trees or shrubs for an effective composition.

This shrub will require occasional maintenance and upkeep, and is best pruned in late winter once the threat of extreme cold has passed. It is a good choice for attracting bees and butterflies to your yard. Gardeners should be aware of the following characteristic(s) that may warrant special consideration;

- Suckering

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Vanilla Spice Summersweet is recommended for the following landscape applications;

- Mass Planting
- General Garden Use
- Naturalizing And Woodland Gardens

Vanilla Spice Summersweet in fall
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Planting & Growing

Vanilla Spice Summersweet will grow to be about 5 feet tall at maturity, with a spread of 5 feet. It tends to fill out right to the ground and therefore doesn't necessarily require facer plants in front, and is suitable for planting under power lines. It grows at a slow rate, and under ideal conditions can be expected to live for approximately 30 years.

This shrub does best in full sun to partial shade. It is quite adaptable, prefering to grow in average to wet conditions, and will even tolerate some standing water. It is not particular as to soil type, but has a definite preference for acidic soils, and is able to handle environmental salt. It is highly tolerant of urban pollution and will even thrive in inner city environments. Consider applying a thick mulch around the root zone in winter to protect it in exposed locations or colder microclimates. This is a selection of a native North American species.

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