



SARATOGA HORTICULTURAL FOUNDATION, INC.

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Scaevola 'Mauve Clusters'

Scaevola 'Mauve Clusters' is an Australian member of the Fan flower family (Goodeniaceae) and is a relatively new addition to the spectrum of available ground covering plants. This particular plant has previously been described as a cultivar of S. humilis however current expertise suggests that it is a hybrid, with this species as one of its parents. S. humilis is a native of Western Australia where it grows in a warm, dry, mediterranean type climate with limited available summer water. It is a closely prostrate, ground covering plant with an ability to remain healthy, flourish and grow vigorously under a wide range of environmental conditions. It is a versatile plant with a capability of withstanding cultivation in relatively arid land situations or of tolerating more conventional levels of irrigation.

This Scaevola was received by SHF from Canningvale Plant Farm, Canninvale, Western Australia in 1979 but has also been introduced and distributed by the Arboretum of UC Santa Cruz.

S. 'Mauve Clusters' is a continuously growing herbaceous plant which produces a profusion of vigorous, prostrate branches radiating from the crown and these carry bright green leaves on short internodes. This produces a quick and dense cover which rarely exceeds a height of 5 or 6 inches. A plant from a gallon can will spread to a three feet diameter in one season in an irrigated landscape. It produces a multiplicity of branches which superimpose themselves on one another to produce a thick, dense mat and thus develops as a very effective ground cover and barrier to weed emergence.

The ultimate spread of this plant is difficult to assess, as left unchecked, it will mound and become unsightly at its centre, so that it should probably be cut back to the crown and the stem material cleared away every third year or so, in order to prevent a build up from a mat of dead or redundant stems. It will root along some branches and occasionally shoots will travel as underground stolons for a few inches, but despite this it does not become invasive; it is readily kept within bounds by cultivation or simply chopping it back with a hoe. For general landscape planting purposes, under such a management regime, it would probably be prudent to set the plants at three to four feet centres.

It flowers prolifically, once established, producing myriads of small (1/2 inch across), mauve coloured, fan shaped flowers on very short stems all over the surface of the plant. The flowering season is from May, through the summer until the first frosts of the winter.

S. humilis is a plant which grows naturally in sandy soils with very low nutrient status and experiences a mediterranean type climate with limited summer water.

Despite its normal adaptation to a mediterranean climate and a consequent ability to tolerate low levels of summer water, it is also a remarkably tolerant plant of a wide range of irrigation practices. Provided the soil is adequately drained it will grow very successfully and vigorously under conventional irrigation regimes. Although it will survive without summer irrigation it does not grow vigorously nor does it look well and in drier landscapes it will benefit from watering every two weeks or so. It will not however tolerate waterlogged soil conditions or those intractable soils produced on some highly disturbed sites.

In general it is a plant which will survive 10 F of frost without serious damage, although it should be expected that a limited amount of scorching will occur on its immediately exposed surfaces, but this soon disappears as new growth begins in the spring. Early season frost however, especially in the fall, may cause severe damage if the plant is still in active growth and has not hardened. In such circumstances the aerial portion of the plant may be killed back but normally the crown will survive and will regrow once temperatures warm up during the ensuing spring; under these circumstances it will be necessary to clear the dead material in order to allow new growth to develop in an uninterrupted fashion. This plant is not therefore suitable for cold winter sites.

It is a very effective ground cover which can be used in a wide variety of situations, its chief limitation being that its soft, herbaceous texture will not allow it to tolerate heavy foot traffic although the occasional foot step is not detrimental.

This is a very prostrate and tolerant plant which maintains its brilliant green foliage over a long season and flowers prolifically; it is a plant which has established itself as a first rate ground cover plant in very quick time.

Ground cover; herbaceous; flowering; bee plant.