



Cerastium tomentosum

Cerastium tomentosum (Snow-in-Summer) is a herbaceous flowering plant and a member of the carnation family. It is generally distinguished from other species of its genus by "tomentose" or felty foliage. It is a low, spreading perennial native to alpine regions of Europe. The stems & leaves are silvery-grey, whilst the flowers are star-like, white & about 15mm across. Not surprisingly, *C. tomentosum* flowers in summer, but may also bloom at other times of the year. It has proven popular as a cultivated ornamental and can be found in gardens the world over.

Culture

Best grown in dry, sandy, well-drained soils in full sun. Tolerates a somewhat wide range of soils except poorly-drained ones which inevitably lead to root rot. Grows well in cool summer climates. Plants are winter hardy to USDA Zone 2. Intolerant of the high summer heat and humidity of the deep South. Spreads by runners to fill in areas, but is not considered to be invasive in the hot St. Louis climate where it is less robust than in cooler northern climates. Plants will self-seed in the garden if spent blooms are not removed. Best to shear off flower stems after bloom in order to prevent self-seeding, reduce future foliage decline, and shape/neaten the foliage mat. Large beds can be mowed on a high setting. Divide every year if needed to help maintain compact size of the mat. Starter plants may be planted 9-12" apart to quickly cover large areas.

Noteworthy Characteristics

Genus name comes from the Greek word *keras* meaning horn in reference to the seed capsule which in some species is bent slightly like a cow's horn.

Specific epithet is in reference to the plant's woolly white leaves and stems.

Problems

No serious insect or disease problems. Damping off may occur in climates with high humidity or locations with too much shade. Root rot can be a serious problem if plants are grown in poorly-drained soils or in soils that remain wet. Plants are short-lived, and dead patches often begin to appear after several years. In St. Louis, foliage usually declines as the summer progresses.

Garden Uses

Ground cover for sunny areas. Rock gardens, border fronts, cottage gardens, edgings, bulb cover or dry stone wall planting pockets.