

Cleome

Cleome hassleriana

Cleome has been a longtime favorite in southern cottage gardens because of its attractive foliage and flowers, and its ability to take the summer heat. And now gardeners have more options, thanks to new varieties that have come on the market. Unlike some plants that fade in the mid-summer heat, cleome keeps right on performing. It blooms heavily in early summer and continues to bloom throughout the season. The whiskery, spider-like flowers can be white, pink, or purple, and often attract hummingbirds. Certain older cultivars tend to be a little leggy at the bottom and have "bare knees," so it can be a good idea to plant something else in front of them. Many older varieties have strong spines on the stem and may put off a somewhat skunky odor. An advantage of the newer cultivars is that most are thorn and odor free. Cleome often self-seeds, which means you'll have plants in the same location year after year. However, certain newer cultivars are sterile and won't produce seeds.

Type: annual

USDA hardiness zones: 10 through 11

Uses: border; mass planting; accent; cutting gardens; containers

Origin: not native to Florida

Height: 2 to 5 feet **Spread:** 1 to 2 feet

Plant spacing: 24 inches

Light requirement: full sun to part sun

Soil tolerances: well drained; acidic; clay; sand; loam

Soil salt tolerance: low to none

Drought tolerance: moderate

Invasive potential: aggressive

Pest resistance: generally pest free; deer and rabbit resistant

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Photo: UF/IFAS