

Veronicastrum virginicum 'Challenger' Challenger Culver's Root

Veronicastrum virginicum 'Challenger' (Challenger Culver's Root) is a 4-season native cultivar with striking upright form and fascinating candelabra flower spikes, adding verticality and year-round structural interest to the garden. Dark green, lance-shaped leaves whorl around the upright stem in a star-like arrangement. Miniscule pale pink and white flowers cluster on terminal spikes, up to 8" long, which bloom sequentially from the bottom up. Blooming stretches from July through September. The flowers are unscented but attract a diverse array of pollinators. Compared to the straight native species, Challenger is shorter (3-4' tall), more uniform and robust in structure, and features pale pink instead of white blooms. Flowers fade in fall, but the candelabra shape persists as bronzed seed heads that remain upright until a heavy snow. This plant prefers full sun and moist soils, but will tolerate part shade and some clay as long as it is well-drained. Deer and herbivores tend to avoid this plant, but it will wilt or yellow in drought. Great for rain gardens, streamside, or pond edge gardens.

Botanical Name: Veronicastrum virginicum 'Challenger'

Common Name: Challenger Culver's Root

Family: Plantaginaceae

Nativity: Great Lakes Native

USDA Zone: 3 to 8

Light Type: Full sun to Part Shade (prefers full sun)

Soil Type: Clay, Loam

Soil Preferences: Moist, well-drained

Soil Moisture: Moist to Wet

Typical height (ft): 3-4'

Typical width (ft): 2-3'

Foliage: Medium to dark green, leaves whorled around stems

Bloom Time: July, August, September

Bloom: Pale pink, white

Ecological features: Provides floral resources for bees, butterflies, and other pollinators.

Tolerance of: Wet soils, heat, deer

Additional notes: New cultivar, limited information, stay tuned.

Companion plants: Ornamental grasses, Coneflowers (Echinacea spp.), Walker's Low Nepeta (Nepeta x faassenii 'Walker's Low')

For more information see:

<https://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/plaveg/pbrpov/cropreport/cul/app00009864e.shtml>

<https://www.futureplants.com/perennial-varieties/veronicastrum/veronicastrum-virginicum-challenger>

<https://www.shootgardening.co.uk/plant/veronicastrum-virginicum-challenger>

Images of Veronicastrum virginicum 'Challenger'



veronicastrum-virginicum-challenger- (1).jpg

spike close-up



1043_Veronicastrum_virginicum_Challenger_2.jpg

plant form



veronicastrum-virginicum-challenger-.jpg

cluster close-up



1043_Veronicastrum_virginicum_Challenger_najaar.jpg

winter seed head

Image choices for narrative:

1043_Veronicastrum_virginicum_Challenger_2.jpg - plant form

veronicastrum-virginicum-challenger- (1).jpg - spike close-up