

Vernonia 'Summer Swan Song' Summer Swan Song Ironweed

Vernonia 'Summer Swan Song' (Summer Swan Ironweed) is a pollinator magnet that brings four seasons of interest to the garden. While the straight species is a towering giant, Summer Swan Song Ironweed is one of the smallest cultivated Ironweeds available, reaching only 3' tall and about as wide. In spring, the fine-textured, olive green foliage emerges as a tidy mound. An abundance of vibrant, magenta-purple, fringed flowers sit atop stems of deep red and purple. Overall, plants have a bushy and full appearance, with flowering branches that interlock to hold stems together. Summer Swan Song is consistent in its uniformity and has an especially attractive red glow in the sun. This plant is excellent at attracting butterflies, moths, bees, and other pollinators. Flowers transition into stiff, feathery domes of seed heads that vary in color from tan to rich burgundy. Summer Swan Song Ironweed can handle brief periods of inundation, but otherwise prefers well-drained, moist to dry soils in full sun. It pairs well with native tall grasses and their cultivars, such as Skywalker Indian Grass and Shenandoah Switchgrass. Although this variety has limited nursery availability, other short-statured cultivars of this four-season beauty are available.

Botanical Name: Vernonia 'Summer Swan Song'

Common Name: Summer Swan Song Ironweed

Family: Asteraceae

Nativity: US Native

USDA Zone: 4 to 9

Light Type: Full Sun

Soil Type: Clay, Loam, Sand

Soil Preferences: Average, well-drained soil

Soil Moisture: Moist to Dry

Typical height (ft): 3

Typical width (ft): 3-4'

Foliage: Dark green with red accents

Bloom Time: September, October

Bloom: Purple

Ecological features: Provides pollen and nectar resources for bees, butterflies, and other pollinators; Long-horned bees are pollen-collecting specialists

Tolerance of: Deer, Rabbit, Heat, Drought

Additional notes: Limited nursery availability; excellent rust and mildew resistance; good for pond, stream, or wetland edge as well as in rain gardens.

Companion plants: Skywalker Indian Grass (*Sorghastrum nutans* 'Skywalker'), Shenandoah Switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum* 'Shenandoah'), Sunflowers (*Helianthus* spp.)

For more information see:

<https://www.northcreeknurseries.com/plantName/Vernonia-Summers-Swan-Song>

http://www.chicagolandgrows.org/perennials/summers_swan_song.php

https://www.chicagobotanic.org/sites/default/files/pdf/plantinfo/vernonia_fg2017.pdf

<https://www.highcountrygardens.com/perennial-plants/unique-plants/vernonia-summers-swan-song-ironweed>

Images of Vernonia 'Summer Swan Song'



summers-swansong-2-lg.jpg

feathery blooms attract pollinators



summers-swansong-1-lg.jpg
flower close-up



summers-swansong-4-lg.jpg
bushy form



summers-swansong-3-lg.jpg
grouped plants

Image choices for narrative:

summers-swansong-2-lg.jpg - feathery blooms attract pollinators

summers-swansong-4-lg.jpg - bushy form