



Henderson County Master Gardeners Weekly News Article October 14, 2018

Why Sweet Flag is Sweet

By Lydia Holley

With all the rain we have been receiving lately, it is nice to find plants that thrive in moist conditions. Sweet flag (*Acorus*) is one such plant. This plant gets its common name from the sweet scent emitted from its leaves when they are crushed.



Sweet flag is evergreen, low maintenance, and resembles the look of an ornamental grass. Although it spreads slowly, it is easily divided in spring, so each year you could potentially double the number of sweet flag you have in your garden. It is lovely planted in a large drift but also makes a beautiful container plant.

Although sweet flag can be grown as a bog plant, it also does well in normally irrigated gardens. I have this plant in two areas of my garden - in a low spot that collects rain water and in a bed with mixed plantings and standard irrigation. Sweet flag grows in full to part shade, but will take full sun conditions if the soil remains moist. If sweet flag gets too dry, the tips may turn brown. You may cut those off if they bother you.

The two most popular varieties of sweet flag are *Acorus calamus* 'Variegatus' and *Acorus gramineus* 'Ogon'. Variegatus is a white and green variegated variety while Ogon has yellow and green variegation. Both will light up a dark area of your garden or contrast nicely with dark-leaved plants or plants with dark blooms. Variegatus can grow up to three feet, but Ogon will stay short, around 12 inches.

You may notice that the rhizome of sweet flag grows on the top of the soil, and sometimes curves in a 'C' pattern. This unusual feature allows you to plant it where its grass-like blades grow in the direction you prefer. Its foliage looks especially nice hanging across the side of a pot or the edge of a walkway.

Want a plant to put in your garden that appreciates the rain? Try sweet flag.

For more information, call 903-675-6130, email hendersonCMGA@gmail.com, or visit txmg.org/hendersonmg.