



Alamosa Landscapes

Winter Flowers?

by Marilyn Loser

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There is still snow on the ground and not much is happening in the garden. My mind turns to the idea of winter flowers. By this I mean flower names that hark of winter by including words such as snow, ice, or icicle and are very cold hardy. I'm only discussing ones that I know grow in the San Luis Valley!

One of my favorites is the showy snowball bush (*Viburnum x carlcephalum*). It has wonderful large, round white flower clusters in the spring. Its mature size is 4-6 ft wide by 6-12 ft high. And I like its foliage after the flowers are spent – it look great until late fall. There is no messy fruit!

We also have a snowberry bush (*Symphoricarpos albus*). It is less showy, but has small white berries in late summer. It's a North American native that is often used for windscreens – I think because it suckers easily and forms dense clumps. I have it in a part of the garden that doesn't get much care or water and it does very well. It's known for tolerating poor, alkali soil which we have a lot of in the SLV! The variety we have is only about 4 ft high after 15 years so I don't think of it as a windbreak. The berries are not generally eaten by people but are browsed by sheep, deer, and cattle. Our berries usually drop by late fall so don't provide winter color.

Snow in summer (*Cerastium tomentosum*) is a perennial ground cover with gray foliage and white blossoms. It's great in rock gardens, spreads gently, and needs little water once established. It's known to be deer resistant. I've never had it die off and I love the gray leaves glistening with snow along our walkway to the front gate in winter.

I have a single clump of snow hill salvia (*Salvia numberosa* "schneehugel") that is about 2 ft wide and 15 in high when displaying its white flowers in mid to late summer. I may look for some more – I'd thought it would spread but hasn't.

Glory of the snow (*Chionodoxa forbesii*) is a tiny spring-blooming, bright blue bulb – very cheerful. I have to seek it out sometimes as it just pokes its head gingerly above spring snow. Over the years it hasn't spread and some have been overtaken by other plants. The common name is based on the habit of flowering in high alpine zones as spring snows melt. I have it on my list for 2020 fall replanting!

Two varieties of hardy, succulent ice plant do well in our rock gardens. I believe it gets its name from being cold hardy. Yellow ice plant (*Delosperma nubigenum*) is the hardiest and spreads

gently reaching a height of only 3 inches. I also have some magenta ice plant (*Delosperma cooperi*) that is not as cold hardy so I plant it in the warmest spots in the rock garden. Sometimes folks confuse ice plants with daisies as their petals have a daisy-like appearance, but they are not related. I do regularly water them, but since, as a succulent they store water, I think they do well with brief spells of drought.

I've had white Ice Star Shasta (*Leucanthemum x superbum 'Ice Star'*) daisies that are double fringed and rated at hardiness zone 4. I love them. Mine died out over one warm, drought year and I've been looking for replacements. Mostly, I do very well with Shasta daisies of all sorts.

Icicle veronica (*Veronica spicata icicle*) has spiky white blooms in summer. I imagine the spikes reminded the namer of upside-down icicles! In general, I find perennial veronicas of many types to be very reliable as long as they are rated zone 3 or even 4.

You can find more information and locally taken photos of all the above plants at either AlamosaFlowers.net or AlamosaTrees.net.

Reminder: "Seed to Seed Community Seed Exchange" will take place on Saturday, January 25, from 2-4 pm. On the floor of Adam State University's Nielsen Library.

"In the depths of winter I finally learned that within me there lay an invincible summer." Albert Camus