

Malva - Growing Guide

Growing Malva

Mallow

Mallows are perennial herbaceous plants which grow in hedge banks, waste areas, roadsides and other dry open habitats in Europe and north Africa where they readily naturalise themselves by self-seeding. They do however make excellent, if short lived, perennial plants in a herbaceous or shrub border or in a wild flower garden. Malva have flowers which are very similar to Lavatera and their positioning in the garden as well as their preferred location is very similar. Malva however have an involucre or whorl of bracts below the flower of one to three bracts whereas Lavatera have three to nine joined bracts.

Malva moschata, the Musk mallow, is an erect and almost woody plant with musk scented leaves. From early summer to early autumn the plants produce saucer shaped pale pink or white flowers which are 1½-2½in across in clusters. The plant grows up to 3ft tall and certainly needs plant supports in more exposed positions to stop it flopping over. In a dense herbaceous border this is probably unnecessary.



Malva moschata



M. moschata 'Alba'



M. moschata 'Alba'



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Malva grow well on fairly fertile soil. On richer improved soils they will grow exponentially and probably have shorter lives. Certainly *M. moschata* will need more plant supports. These plants can readily be propagated from seed but are probably best left to self-seed themselves in situ which they readily will given any bare patch of earth nearby. When tidying the plants up at the end of the season you can help distribute the seeds as you wish from the dead flower heads.

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