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Galtonia candicans - Growing Guide

Growing Galtonia Candicans

Spire lily

Galtonia are large bulbs which you plant in the spring rather than the autumn. This is a large bulbous perennial which grows in moist grasslands in South Africa but is fully hardy in our UK climate. These are border bulbs rather than for naturalising in wilder parts of the garden and grow equally well in pots. In colder parts of the UK a mulching over the bulbs is advisable but, equally, they can be lifted in the autumn when the plants have died down and the bulbs overwintered in a cool potting shed or greenhouse.

G. candicans needs a fertile well drained soil which will remain moist in a dry summer. In pots they prefer a rich loamy compost with peat and fertiliser for best results.

The leaves are grey-green and lance shaped. In maturity they can be 3ft tall. The flowers appear from the top of the bulb and within the leaves as racemes of tubular fragrant white flowers on long leafless stems. There may be 20 to 30 individual flowers on each raceme and the flowers are about 2in long. These flowers make attractive companions for many other more well-known border plants especially as the flowers only appear in late summer.

Galtonia can therefore complement Aster, Sedum or Leucanthemum.

The bulbs will produce offsets which can be lifted and removed in early spring while the main bulbs remain dormant. Although it is sensible to remove old flower stalks to prevent the main bulb wasting energy on setting seeds you will find viable seed heads in early autumn. The seeds

should be sown immediately in a cold frame in pots as soon as ripe and the seedlings should have frost protection in the first couple of years.

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