

Limonium Growing Guide

Growing Limonium

Statice, Sea Lavender

While stocks last we have been offering two forms of different species of these attractive and much sought after plants. Not all species and varieties of Limonium are perennials but *L. perezii* and *L. gmelinii* 'Dazzle Rocks' definitely are. Despite the common name, these plants are not, in fact, from the lavender family but are from the plumbago or leadwort family.

L. perezii originates from the Canary Islands and is hardy to only around minus 3°C. As you would expect, these plants require hot, dry and well drained locations. They thrive in more frost free, maritime conditions and are suitable for rock gardens, border edges or for growing in containers in the greenhouse. They grow well in sandy and slightly alkaline soils and should never be allowed to get waterlogged in the ground or when overwintered in pots in the greenhouse. They will tolerate drought and salt sprays. We have not found (so far) that they are attractive to deer or rabbits. If you do leave them outside over winter a heavy mulch will help to protect them.

L. perezii grows only to around 6-10 inches in height (with the flowerheads) and produces the most attractive huge calyxes of flowers surrounded by calyxes of a different colour. Its flowering season is May-August. The imposing calyxes are a vibrant purple-blue and white flowers eventually emerge from the calyxes to give a spectacular and unusual or surreal colour contrast. Quite stunning when the author first saw these plants being propagated for the 2023 Chelsea Flower Show where Burncoose were awarded a Gold Medal.

Once the flowers have finished the colourful calyxes remain in place but, for the good of the plant, the flower stalks should be removed from the

plant soon after flowering and before seed sets. The flowers can also make a wonderful arrangement when cut and/or dried as they retain their colour (as do other forms of *Statice*).

L. gmelinii 'Dazzle Rocks' is a new variety which should have been launched at the lockdown Chelsea in 2020. Unlike *L. perezii* (and many other forms of Sea Lavender) this is a genuinely hardy variety which was bred, not just for its hardiness, but also, as a cut or dried flower. It is drought tolerant and heat resistant and, like all *Limonium*, especially attractive to bees and other pollinators.

'Dazzle Rocks' is perfectly happy in full sun or partial shade and will achieve a height of 12-15 inches (with flower stems). It is a semi-evergreen perennial but it can lose some (or even all) of its basal rosette of rich green foliage over winter with no ill effect. Large quantities of stalked and long lasting flowers are produced from June to September. These consist of masses of small lilac-purple individual flowers.

Although this is a hardy plant an autumn mulch will help protect the foliage and, again, removing the old flower stalks will help preserve the plants vigour.

Propagation by division in the early spring of established clumps is probably the best method of propagation but basal cuttings in summer are the alternative. If grown from seed these particular *Limonium* can take 3 or 4 years to achieve flowering size.

(Still needs images)

