

## Phytolacca - Growing Guide

### Growing *Phytolacca Americana*

#### *American Pokeweed*

This is an erect unpleasant smelling perennial whose stems and berries are highly toxic if eaten and, in milder conditions, will readily self-seed itself into a border. Why would anyone bother to grow such a plant?

At Ventnor Botanic Gardens in the Isle of Wight this plant has naturalised itself widely but it is only allowed to remain in darker corners of the garden where not much else grows. It is actually quite a good plant for concealing a rubbish dump in a far corner of the garden. The main attraction of the plant is however its attractive red and purple autumn foliage colour and decorative seed heads with many black seeds in attractive whorls.

*Phytolacca americana* has fleshy roots and red marked main stems. In ideal conditions a mature plant can grow up to 10ft tall with a branched spread of about 3ft. More than enough to conceal a compost heap!

The flowers appear from July to September and are white or pink in long 8-12in racemes which will become pendant as the seeds swell and develop from green to pink and then black when ripe.

If you really want to grow this plant it is easy enough from spring sown seed but not a plant for a garden with young children playing in it.



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