

Plant Profile - Snowflake Euphorbia

Scientific Name: *Euphorbia leucocephala*.

Family: Euphorbiaceae

Common Names: White-laced Euphorbia, Snowflake Euphorbia, Flor de Nino, Pascuita, Snows of Kilimanjaro, Little Christmas Flower

Native to: Southern Mexico to El Salvador



Description: The Euphorbia Family is known for many ornamental specimens such as poinsettias, crown-or-thorns, snowbush and crotons as well as many plants of economic and medicinal importance such as those that produce cassava, tapioca, rubber and castor oil. The White-laced Euphorbia is a shrub to small tree. The leaves are arranged around the stems or whorled, they are somewhat variable in shape but mostly linear to 3 inches with long stems or petioles. The true flowers are small, insignificant but fragrant, borne in umbels that are surrounded by showy white to cream modified leaves called bracts.

Hardiness: USDA hardiness zones 9 through 11, does not tolerate freezing temperatures.

Height/Width: Can be grown as a shrub or small tree, depending on pruning, 5 – 12 feet tall by 5-8 feet wide.

Light: Full sun to part shade, with sun the preferred location.

Soil/Moisture: It grows and blooms best in hot, sunny, dry locations, soil must be extremely well drained. Very drought tolerant, however, blooms best with an occasional application of water if weather is very dry.

Culture/Use: White-lace euphorbia blooms in response to length of day, just like its cousin the Poinsettia. The flowers appear around Thanksgiving and will last into the New Year. Pascuita can become leggy and rangy, prune after flowering for size and shape, but no more than 1/3 of the plant. Fertilize 2 -4 times per year with a balanced fertilizer, mulch to control weeds and conserve moisture. No pests are reported as serious problems. Little Christmas Flower is spectacular used in a border or a mixed background planting, also a good choice for large containers on patios where the fragrance can be enjoyed.

Misuses & Notes: Not a plant for formal hedges, does not like to be sheared. Considered unattractive to some folks when not in bloom as it can be deciduous or sparsely leaved in some locations. Plant in dark locations, light at night after Labor Day will delay or prevent flowering. Will rot in heavily irrigated landscapes.

*Produced by Carol Cloud Bailey, Stuart, Florida. 1/17/2006. Photos by Dr. George Rogers, PBCC
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