

Niagara College Greenhouse & Nursery Success Sheet No. 33

Night Gardens

White for Moonlight

Virtually any plants that bloom with white, cream, or yellow flowers can be part of the moonlight garden. As these plants reflect moonlight, their blooms jump out of their muted green surroundings.

When these flowers are combined with hard reds and dark blues, the reds and blues will disappear with dusk to leave only the white ones visible. A mingling with pale lavender, sky blue and shell pink creates more intermediate colours, a combination that seems to resist the coming of night.

Plants with gray or silvery foliage also become iridescent under night lighting. Because their leaves reflect light, an effect is made even when the plants are not in bloom.

You can manipulate garden lights to subtly mimic moonlight and enhance this characteristic artificially. Also, you can dedicate in your garden a strategic point for the moon, where its wan light may strike the flowers without shadows of trees or buildings. The perfect accessories for any night garden are a moon dial, a bench and even a swing.

Plant Selection

When selecting plants, remember that there may be many varieties of a single species, and often these will include a cultivar with white flowers. For example, *Syringa vulgaris* is the common purple lilac, but the cultivar 'Miss Wilmott' blooms pure white. Also, before buying a plant, be sure it is hardy for your climate zone.

Fragrance

Fragrance is also important; however, few species emit fragrance only at night. It may be simpler to plant those with pale-colored flowers but strong fragrance to incorporate this factor into your plan. Plants with aromatic foliage can also be incorporated; a tiny garden of manicured herbs can be quite powerfully scented.

A star performer under moonlight is the calla lily; it blossoms with white, crape-petaled flowers with a yolk-sized bundle of orange stamens at the center. Where conditions are mild, the blooms of all gardenias remain fully open in moonlight and emit a heavenly fragrance reminiscent of exotic tropical jungles.

An excellent groundcover that really glows is snow-in-summer. It is a potent mass of white when in bloom.

Some of the most fragrant plants for night gardens are vines. Since they are so versatile in the landscape, they fit into even the smallest patio. Vines can grow large and submit to creative pruning, which concentrates their blossoms into a small space and intensifies the scent.

Many more plants can be included in the night garden. For more information, try *The Evening Garden*, by Peter Loewer; his Website, <http://www.thewildgardener.com/>; and *Evening Gardens* by Cathy Barash.

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