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Sweet alyssum is good pansy partner



NORMAN WINTER, MSU EXTENSION SERVICE VIA McCLATCHY-TRIBUNE

Looking for a dazzling fall flower combination? Partner fragrant Clear Crystal sweet alyssum with Lemon Fizzleberry pansy for a jolt of color.

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Gardeners can rejoice since it is pansy-planting time across much of the country. While this is a good thing, the question is always asked, "What do I plant with them?"

One of my favorites to partner with pansies is sweet alyssum. No matter where you live in the country, at some time during the year you can grow pansies and alyssum together for a magnificent olfactory experience.

Sweet alyssum is known scientifically as *Lobularia maritima*. It is from the Mediterranean region and is grown as an annual across most of the country. It is in the brassica family, meaning it is related to cabbage, similar to two other great fragrant, cool-season plants, stock and erysimum.

Clear Crystal is a fairly new tetraploid series of sweet alyssum. Such words as tetraploid and diploid can get confusing really fast. What this means for you as a gardener, however, is that Clear Crystal is packed with vigor and has large flowers, a big improvement in the sweet alyssum.

Plant them in full sun beds with fertile, organic-rich soil that drains well. Space your plants 6 to 10 inches apart, knowing they will spread close to 14 inches and reach about 6 to 10 inches tall.

In the landscape, think of them

as being a front-of-the-border plant combined with pansies, snapdragons, cabbage or kale, dianthus and erysimum. You'll find them blooming a lot longer than you thought, with only intense heat causing them to relinquish their beauty and fragrance.

Because of their wonderful spreading habit, you'll notice they have the ability to soften the harsh, straight edges along a sidewalk or driveway.

As great as they are in the landscape, you may love them even more in a container. The rim of your container will disappear as the glorious, fragrant little flowers tumble over the edge. In a container combined with an ornamental grass and pansies, you'll find them intermingling with the foliage of the other plants.

Pansies offer enticing fragrance, and when combined with sweet alyssum, you've created a container that you'll want to place prominently on your porch, patio or deck, or perhaps by the front door so you can enjoy the heavenly aroma every time you go outside.

Cool-season flowers are actively growing now. Should rains become sparse, add supplemental water when necessary. A little water-soluble fertilizer applied a couple of times during the growing season will pay dividends and have you relishing the beauty of your pansies and partners.