

White, Silver, and Beyond - Creating a Moonlight Garden

One of the things I enjoy most about summer is the way dusk lingers for an hour or more. During that time the bold colours in our gardens gradually recede, giving way to whites, creams, and silvers which bring the garden to life, especially under a rising moon. Since Victorian times, gardeners have been enhancing this experience by creating romantic Moonlight Gardens. Such gardens became popular in Great Britain in the nineteenth century, the most renowned of which can still be enjoyed at England's Sissinghurst Castle.

The concept of a Moonlight Garden, Moonlit Garden, or Moon Garden involves featuring white flowers and foliage that glow in both the gentle light of the heavenly bodies and under artificial garden lighting, as well as adding mystery and allure through their heady fragrances.

Planning a Moonlight Garden

- ☉ Consider location carefully. Determine the path of the moon as it relates to your yard. Avoid areas where trees or buildings will cast moonshadows. Think about where you will sit in the evening to enjoy your garden.
- ☉ Consider supplementing the moonlight with inexpensive solar lighting strategically placed. Lighting on your deck, patio, or window would be effective
- ☉ Keep your Moonlight Garden small. Consider creating a new bed in the shape of a crescent moon.
- ☉ There are many different shades of white. Juxtaposing two will surely make one of them look dingy! Separate such blooms with other plants sporting gray-green foliage.
- ☉ By all means add scented foliage and blooms, but don't group these plants together. Those scents will compete for your attention, when each one's uniqueness should be enjoyed separately and distinctly.
- ☉ Plant several specimens (perennials, annuals, shrubs, and trees) from each of the following categories:
 - White flowering specimens
 - Fragrant and/or night-flowering plants
 - Foliage with predominately white variegation
 - Silver foliage

Some Plants to Use

White flowering specimens:

- ☼ *Clematis* 'Candida'
- ☼ *Iberis sempervirens* 'Autumn Snow' (Candytuft)
- ☼ *Verbena* 'Armour White'
- ☼ *Papaver orientale* 'Perry's White'
- ☼ *Hydrangea arborescens* 'Annabelle'
- ☼ *Syringia vulgaris* (Lilac) 'Angel White'
- ☼ *Cosmos* 'Purity'
- ☼ *Cleome* 'White Queen'
- ☼ *Leucanthemum* (Shasta Daisy) 'Christine Hagemann'
- ☼ *Dicentra alba* (White Bleeding Heart)
- ☼ *Phlox paniculata* 'David' – fragrant blooms too, resistant to powdery mildew
- ☼ *Paeonia* 'Krinkled White'
- ☼ *Zinnia* 'Crystal Star'
- ☼ *Actaea* 'Black Negligee' – chocolate-scented blooms in late summer

Fragrant and/or night flowering plants:

- ☼ *Oenothera* (Evening Primrose)
- ☼ *Matthiola incana* (Evening Stock)
- ☼ *Philadelphus coronarius* (Mock Orange) – shrub with orange-scented white flowers in spring
- ☼ *Nicotiana* (Flowering Tobacco)
- ☼ *Hemerocallis* (Daylily) – 'Moon Frolic' and 'Jolly White Giant'

- ☼ *Mirabilis jalapa* (Four O'Clock)
- ☼ *Brugmansia* 'Candida' (White Angel's Trumpet)
- ☼ *Ipomoea alba* (Moonflower) – annual vine, blooms at dusk, closes at dawn

Silver foliage and foliage with white variegation:

- ☼ *Lamium maculatum* 'Purple Dragon'
- ☼ *Stachys byzantina* (Woolly Lambs' Ears)
- ☼ *Hosta* 'Fire and Ice'
- ☼ *Centaurea cineraria* (Dusty Miller)
- ☼ *Brunnera* 'Jack Frost'
- ☼ *Athyrium* 'Ghost' (Japanese Painted Fern)
- ☼ *Pulmonaria* 'Silver Shivers' (Lungwort)
- ☼ *Helichrysum* (Licorice Vine)
- ☼ *Perovskia* (Russian Sage)
- ☼ *Artemisia* (Silvermound)

For more inspiration:

- Read [The Moonlit Garden](#) by Scott Ogden, available from Amazon.ca .
- Visit the Edison and Ford winter estates in Ft. Myers, Florida. Mrs. Edison created a Moonlight Garden next to what they called The Little Office. This was in 1929. She commissioned one of the first female landscape architects, Ellen Biddle Shipman, to design it.

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