
ENVIRONMENTAL HORTICULTURE

Environmental Horticulture #EH414



FLAX

PRODUCTION AND CONSUMER CARE

Thomas M. Blessington, David L. Clement, and Kevin G. Williams
Central Maryland Research and Education Center
University of Maryland

INTRODUCTION

- Common name: Flax
- Scientific name: *Linum perenne*
- Native to Europe, primarily in the Alps
- Slender herbaceous perennial growing up to 2' tall
- Clear blue flowers with five petals appear in late spring
- Plants produce a profusion of buds, providing plenty of flowers during the blooming season
- Hardy to zone 4

GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

- Grows well in full sun or partial shade
- Prefers light, well-drained media

- Media can be acidic, neutral, or alkaline
- Tolerates periods of mild drought
- Feed with an all-purpose granular fertilizer once in spring
- Benefits from a 2-3 inch layer of mulch

PROPAGATION

- Easily grown from seeds
- Sow seeds outdoors early in spring and cover with 1/8'' of light media
- Plants will not bloom the first year
- Flax clumps are difficult to divide successfully
- Existing plants occasionally self-sow, providing seedlings for transplant

DISORDERS

- Rust (*Melampsora lini*)
 - Bright orange and powdery pustules form
 - Remove and destroy infected plants
- Wilt (*Fusarium oxysporum*)
 - Leaves yellow and wilt
 - Plant turns brown and dies
 - Remove and destroy infected plants

CONSUMER CARE

- Popular choice for perennial borders
- Not suitable for cut flowers, as blooms have a very short lifetime
- Broad range of medicinal uses, including promotion of heart health
- Seeds are used in herbal teas and sprouts are used in salads

CULTIVARS AND SPECIES

- *Linum perenne*
 - 'Album': white flowers
 - 'Sapphire': sapphire blue flowers

References

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Linum_perenne

<http://www.gardenersnet.com/fflower/flax.htm>

<http://www.flaxcouncil.ca/english/index.php?p=growing8&mp=growing>

<http://www.yardener.com/BlueFlax.html>

Mention of trade names does not constitute an endorsement by the Maryland Cooperative Extension, University of Maryland, College Park, or University of Maryland, Eastern Shore.