American Bugbane

Cimicifuga racemosa



American Bugbane in bloom
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Plant Height: 3 feet

Flower Height: 5 feet

Spread: 3 feet

Sunlight: ○ ◐ ●

Hardiness Zone: 3a

Other Names: Black Snakeroot, Black Cohosh, Actaea racemosa

Description:

From shaded areas to full sun, fragrant white, bottle brush flowers rise high above lacy, green foliage; blooming mid to late summer, great for mixed containers, garden beds or fresh-cut arrangements; easy to grow and can be cut back in fall

Ornamental Features

American Bugbane features bold spikes of fragrant white flowers rising above the foliage from mid to late summer. The flowers are excellent for cutting. Its attractive serrated compound leaves remain green in color with prominent deep purple tips throughout the season. The brown fruits are carried on spikes from late summer to late winter.

Landscape Attributes

American Bugbane is an herbaceous perennial with tall flower stalks held atop a low mound of foliage. Its relatively coarse texture can be used to stand it apart from other garden plants with finer foliage.

This is a relatively low maintenance plant, and should be cut back in late fall in preparation for winter. It has no significant negative characteristics.

American Bugbane is recommended for the following landscape applications;

- Mass Planting
- General Garden Use
- Naturalizing And Woodland Gardens
- Container Planting

Planting & Growing

American Bugbane will grow to be about 3 feet tall at maturity extending to 5 feet tall with the flowers, with a spread of 3 feet. It tends to be leggy, with a typical clearance of 1 foot from the ground, and should be underplanted with lower-growing perennials. It grows at a slow rate, and under ideal conditions can be expected to live for approximately 10 years. As an herbaceous perennial, this plant will usually die back to the crown each winter, and will regrow from the base each spring. Be careful not to disturb the crown in late winter when it may not be readily seen!

This plant performs well in both full sun and full shade. It prefers to grow in moist to wet soil, and will even tolerate some standing water. It is not particular as to soil type or pH. It is somewhat tolerant of urban pollution. This species is native to parts of North America. It can be propagated by division.

American Bugbane is a fine choice for the garden, but it is also a good selection for planting in outdoor pots and containers. With its upright habit of growth, it is best suited for use as a 'thriller' in the 'spiller-thriller-filler' container combination; plant it near the center of the pot, surrounded by smaller plants and those that spill over the edges. It is even sizeable enough that it can be grown alone in a suitable container. Note that when growing plants in outdoor containers and baskets, they may require more frequent waterings than they would in the yard or garden.