

# PLANT OF THE WEEK

November 13, 2009

## Japanese Anemone *Anemone x hybrida*

Blooming in our landscape: *Vinca minor*, sporadically. Winter jasmine (*Jasminum nudiflorum*) is covered in blooms (if indeed it ever could be: they are sparse bloomers by nature). *Camellia x 'Winter Snowman'* has been putting on a real show in our protected Meditation garden. There was a rose blooming very fragrantly last weekend in a neighborhood near me in Hamden. Dandelions have sent up exploratory yellow heads in the last few days, as if to say "This global warming stuff isn't so bad, really." There is a *Dahlia* still perking along in the sunny border near the *Camellias*. Then there are lots of plants with berries. Let's talk about them next week.

I admit, this isn't the first time I've written about Japanese Anemone, but two years ago, I embedded its story in a tale of one of my visits to the Colonel. So this time, let us take a bit more sober a look at this lovely late-season plant.

Our small patch of Japanese Anemones really likes it where we planted it, on the north side of greenhouse 1b, where it gets plenty of reflected and diffuse light. They will tolerate full sun, but they tend to be more prone to drying out, which stresses a plant. Our plants get more than their share of rainfall, as that greenhouse structure has no gutters on it, so the plants get not only the rain that falls within their drip-line, but also the watershed up to the peak. I was careful in my plant selection for this area, to account for that one hydrological fact.

Japanese Anemones prefer a moist humus-rich soil, which is also exactly what we have given ours. This plant is at its best when given enough room to expand a bit, so plant them eighteen inches apart and a good two feet from other plants in the area. They will spread by underground runners. I have heard people claim that this Anemone is a 'thug,' but I can forgive a thug who is so charming.

*Anemone x hybrida* blooms in late summer into October. Indeed ours is done, but the seed heads are also ornamental, which prompted this article today. The flowers are pink to white, not very fragrant if at all, but much beloved by bees: what the plant lacks in nectaries, it makes up for in pollen I guess. The flowers are held above the foliage on long stalks, with six to twelve buds on each one. The sum result looks like a cloud of butterflies shimmering in a breeze.

The genus name *Anemone* is from the Greek word *anemos* for wind. The common name for several genera of the related *Ranunculus* or Buttercup family (*Ranunculaceae*) is Windflower. There are over a hundred species in the genus. Our species is a mixed-up *mélange* that took years and countless accidents to produce. The Buttercup family includes over 50 genera and 2500 species, all herbaceous plants. Our plant is specifically *A. x hybrida* 'Honorine Jobert,' a vigorous hybrid discovered growing in a garden in Verdun, France in 1858. It has white flowers.

For late summer bloom, carefree growing and interesting seedpods, you can't go wrong with the Japanese Anemone, available through mail order or from your local nursery. A word about 'big box stores:' Al-

though the prices seem good, there is always risk in relying on such purveyors when buying plants. Mass-produced, trucked all over the country, handled with less than delicate care, indifferently cared for at the store, these plants are prone to be root-bound, poor condition plants. So buyer, beware!

Until next week, I remain your friendly gardening correspondent...

Eric



*The fuzzy white seedhead of Anemone x hybrida attracts attention long after the flowers have disappeared.*



*The plant itself, which gets three feet high by four or more feet wide.*

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