

the pack trials

COMPANION COVERAGE

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Scaevola

Outback Fan Flower

This series is bringing new potential to a standard crop.

By Frauntene McLarney



'Outback White Fan'

Scaevola is a well-known Australian native that thrives in gardens throughout North America from spring to fall, even during the worst heat of summer. The Fan Series (*Scaevola aemula*) consists of four cultivars in four different colors: Purple Fan, Fan Dancer, Sparkling Fan and White Fan. Fan Dancer tends to be a little more compact and upright in growth habit as compared to Purple Fan, which is more trailing. A new pure white, large flowered scaevola, White Fan, received much attention and was one of the most talked-about new cultivars at the 2003 California Pack Trials. It has the largest flowers in the series and a strong growth habit that is more similar to Purple Fan.

PROPAGATION

Rooting time is 4-5 weeks. Scaevola require rooting hormone for best rooting; choose one with up to 2,500 ppm IBA or up to 500 ppm of NAA to achieve uniform rooting. Best results can be achieved using vegetative cuttings free of flowers.

Misting requirements for this crop are lower than most vegetative crops, with cuttings that

prefer to be kept a little on the dry side. The crop should be monitored for overwatering during the propagation cycle, as excess moisture will slow rooting and can increase the chance of root rot and fungus gnat infestation. Soil temperatures of 70-75° F are ideal during propagation. Although not required, scaevola benefit from bottom heat during propagation by decreasing rooting time. Pinching cuttings once the roots have started to grow will enhance overall plant habit and performance after transplant.

GROWING ON

Scaevola prefer a well-drained soil with little to no phosphate added. Like most Australian natives, scaevola is sensitive to phosphorous, which can cause discoloration and foliage desiccation when present at levels higher than required. Use a complete, balanced fertilizer, low in phosphorus, at 200-250 ppm nitrogen continuous liquid feed. Maintain a soil pH between 5.5-6.0 and an EC below 2.0 saturated media extract (SME). If yellow leaves appear, apply iron either through an iron chelate foliar spray or drench or an iron sulfate drench. Be careful not to apply iron sulfate to the foliage.

Scaevola does well with light levels of 4,000-6,000 foot-candles and day temperatures of 70-85° F. Night temperatures should be between 68-70° F. Scaevola can be grown with cool crops, but flowering time will be delayed at average temperatures below 60° F. Scaevola rarely needs any growth regulator. Growing with average temperatures of 65° F will help keep plants compact.

One pinch 2-4 weeks after transplant greatly improves flower count and plant shape. Generally, a mature plant will flower within 5-6 weeks after pinching. Crop time after transplant is 6-8 weeks for a 4-inch pot, 10-12 weeks for a 6½-inch pot and 12-14 weeks for a 10-inch pot or basket. Using two cuttings in pot sizes larger than 4 inches, and up to four cuttings in 10-inch baskets, will make a fuller product with high consumer appeal.

PESTS AND DISEASES

Scaevola does not have any significant insect problems, though aphids, scales, thrips and caterpillars have all been found on plants when conditions favor these pests. Fungus gnat larvae can be an issue in propagation and early development, especially with over-misting and irrigating.

Botrytis can affect the flowers and foliage. Maintaining good watering practices, air circulation and relative humidity go a long way to prevent problems. A preventative spray can be applied, especially after pinching, to avoid problems with this disease.

Scaevola can also suffer from root and stem rot. This can be managed by allowing media to dry between watering and applying preventive soil drenches shortly after transplanting. As a mature plant, scaevola can tolerate light wilting and recover quickly as long as roots are healthy. GPN

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'Outback Purple Fan'

WHY SCAEVOLA WHITE FAN?

Welcome to *GPN's* new Crop Culture Report. With so many new varieties introduced every year, we understand the need for technical production information and the importance of focusing on truly new introductions. And, we've refocused our Culture Section to give you the information you need, starting here at the Crop Culture Report with information about not only how to grow a specific plant but why you should be growing it.

'Outback White Fan' was chosen in our "Editor's Pick of the Pack Trials, part I" (See *GPN* June 2003) and was one of my favorites at this year's California Pack Trials. Scaevola is nothing new and unique, but Ecker has added a variety that stands out from the rest — literally. The flowers on White Fan are more visible and are not hidden under the foliage like most other white scaevolans. Scaevola was one of the first vegetative annuals introduced, and this new series could revive an old favorite. The fact that White Fan is a pure white — one of the hottest colors of the season — and that it has such a short crop time, make it a great late-season crop. — *Carrie Burns*

