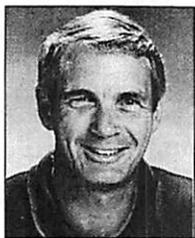


# INVINCIBLE ACHILLEA

by Allan Armitage, University of Georgia



## Sales Talk:

Salespeople should know that there are several different species, quite different in habit, landscape effect and even production needs.

1. They are all sun-loving, no shade tolerant yarrows can be honestly recommended.

2. Some are more persistent than others for the consumer and not all can be recommended as being persistent in the landscape.

3. All are reasonably drought tolerant, and most are heat tolerant, useful to Florida and Texas. However, most yarrows love cold and flower more rapidly and more profusely with cold winters.

## Enhancing Sales with the Story:

Everyone, from little old ladies to tough guys, enjoys a good story. Sales of many plants can be enhanced by letting people know more about them. Yarrows are no exception.

*Achillea is named after the Greek warrior Achilles (the story of the almost invincible Achilles and the Achilles tendon is also eye-popping for consumers, but another day). What most people don't know is that yarrow was used by Achilles to stanch the wounds of his warriors, and the other lesser-known common name of Woundwort. The leaves of Common yarrow (A. millefolium) contain coagulants which help stop bleeding.*

## What is available for Sale:

Growers can easily produce the following groups of plants:

### The yellow yarrows:

**Coronation Gold**, the best tall yellow yarrow, useful for landscapes and cut flowers. Propagated vegetatively only. It is an interspecific hybrid and seed is not available. Grows 2-3' tall in a gallon, 3-3.5' tall in the landscape. Flowers naturally in early summer in the North, late spring in the South. This was bred and named to by Alan Bloom of England to commemorate the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953. And she still reigns.

**Height: 3-4' Spread: 3-4' Hardiness: zones 3-8 Persistence: excellent**

**'Gold Plate' and 'Parker's Var'** are available from seed, but as potted plants on the nursery, they become tall and flop over a good deal. In the landscape, similar problems occur. However, they are cheap and easy to produce. Growth regulation such as Bonzi is useful in the container.

**Height: 3-5' Spread: 3-4' Hardiness: zones 3-8 Persistence: good**

**'Anthea'** is my favorite for a smaller yellow yarrow, providing outstanding color ranging from bright to sulphur yellow. Better than the more common 'Moonshine' because of better weather tolerance and disease resistance. Only available vegetatively. More expensive than 'Moonshine' but worth it.

**Height: 2-3' Spread: 2-3' Hardiness: zones: 3-8 Persistence: excellent**

### The colored yarrows (A. millefolium and hybrids)

The colored hybrids of *A. millefolium* (so named because of the many leaflets on the leaves) can be weedy in landscapes but fill containers quickly. They also can become overgrown in containers and if started too early will require a shearing.

### Some of the choices:

**'Rose Beauty', 'Roseum'** and other seed-propagated selections are the cheapest and usually the worst in the landscape, however since the consumer doesn't know the difference, they continue to be produced. They tend to be inconsistent and variable in production and in the landscape can become quite invasive. Many colors are available.

**Height: 1-2' Spread: wide Hardiness: zones 3-8 Persistence: excellent**

Hybrids such as **'Appleblossum', 'Fanal', 'Colorado', 'Martina', 'Fireland'** and **'Terra Cotta'**. Propagated vegetatively and more expensive than the above-mentioned 'Roseum' material. All of these are much more consistent, better in the container and better landscape plants. The major perennial nurseries are doing most of these, greenhouse operators seem content with the seed material. That is a shame.

#### 'Appleblossum' pastel pink

**Height: 2-3' Spread: 2-3' Persistence: Good Comments: flowers can fade in heat**

#### 'Fanal' ('The Beacon') rose-red

**Height: 2-3' Spread: 2-3' Persistence: good Comments: looks better in cooler climate**

#### 'Martina' pastel yellow

**Height: 2-3' Spread: 2-3' persistence: good Comments: Best yellow by far in this group. Outstanding selection even in South.**

#### 'Fireland' and 'Terra Cotta' terra cotta

**Height: 2-4' Spread: 2-3' Persistence: good Comments: Both have "knock-your-socks-off" flower color. 'Terra Cotta' is too tall, 'Fireland' is the cultivar to choose for smaller stature.**

The previous choices are likely sufficient for most growers, however, a number of other yarrows are worth considering.

Sneezewort (*A. ptarmica*)

So called because it used to be used as a substitute for snuff. If one of your customers is still into that sort of thing, you can sell hundreds of these things. If not, the white flowers are excellent for the landscape as well as cuts. Best grown in a gallon container, plants can get tall particularly if forced with incandescent light. Sold under the name of "The Pearl" ('Boule de Neige'), 'Ballerina' and 'Angel's Breath' (very little difference between any of them). Choose the least expensive.

**Height:** 1-2.5' **Spread:** 1-2' **Hardiness:** zones 3-7  
**Persistence:** good

Siberian Yarrow (*A. sibirica*)

Relatively new, tough as nails and much more dwarf than others previously mentioned. Leaves are leathery, flowers are white to pink and the newness of the plant is sure to elicit interest. Better in North than South. Sold as the species or as 'Kiku-San, a pink-flowering form.

**Height:** 12-18" **Spread:** 12" **Hardiness:** zones 2-8  
**Persistence:** good

Many other forms of yarrow are available and all can be tried in 6" to gallon containers. The genus is a good place to start for new perennial growers because it is not so new to intimate people but enough new material is in the genus to attract those who know plants well.

Forcing yarrows: Forcing yarrows for earlier flowering may be accomplished, however, numerous problems can occur. Providing 6-10 weeks of cold (33-40) results in more rapid flowering. The cold may be provided naturally or in coolers, to plugs (72-120 are commonly used) or to 4" or greater pots. Long days also enhances flowering, particularly on *A. millefolium* hybrids, and can be provided by 2-3 weeks of night break lighting. However, even when naturally flowered, flower stems tend to flop in containers. Adding incandescent light can exacerbate that problem. Application of a growth regulator, such as Bonzi, when flower stems become visible can help. In one grower I worked with, the problems of forcing were not worth the frustrations.



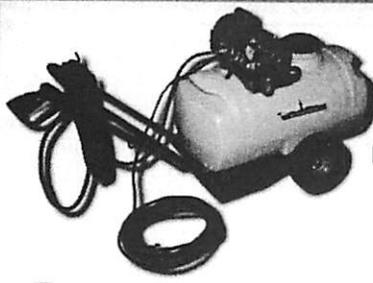
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