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liatris



Photo courtesy of Bay City Flower Co., Inc.

Liatris spicata
Blazing star, Gay-feather, Button snakeroot

in-store and consumer care

LIGHT Bright, indirect light is best for plants displayed indoors. Filtered sun is tolerated outdoors. The best flowering will be exhibited on plants grown in partial shade.

WATER Water the plants well, allowing them to dry between watering. Avoid irregular or overhead watering or standing water on the foliage and flowers.

TEMPERATURE Warm temperatures—65 F to 75 F—are best for displaying *Liatris* plants. Storage temperatures should not go below 55 F or exceed 75 F.

HUMIDITY These plants thrive in areas with moderate humidity.

FERTILIZER Fertilize *Liatris*es during their growing season, stopping when the blossoms are set.

GROOMING Cut the plants back to soil level when they have finished flowering to

BOTANICAL NAME

Liatris spicata
(ly-AT-riss or lee-AT-riss, spih-KAH-tuh)

COMMON NAMES

Blazing star, Gay-feather, Button snakeroot

DESCRIPTION

*Liatris*es form slender, 6- to 10-inch-tall spikes with needlelike petals. The stems can grow as tall as 32 inches.

COLORS

*Liatris*es are most often found in hues of

violet, from deep purple to lavender. Pink, rose and white varieties are available, too.

DECORATIVE LIFE

Each bloom cycle will last for several weeks. The plants can rebloom for years, depending on the environment and care.

AVAILABILITY

Liatris plants are available mostly during mid to late summer and early fall (July through October).



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remove faded flowers, leaves and stems.

REPLANTING When the plants have finished blooming, they can be moved to the garden, where they can bloom again for years and will attract birds and butterflies. They may need to be staked.

challenges

ETHYLENE SENSITIVITY *Liatris* plants may display sensitivity to ethylene exposure. Check with your supplier to make sure your plants are treated with an anti-ethylene agent at the grower or transportation level.

PESTS These plants are relatively insect free. Watch for red spider mites on indoor

fun facts

WHAT'S IN A NAME The species name "*spicata*" comes from the Latin word "*spica*," which means "spike."

FAMILY *Liatris* is a member of the *Asteraceae* (formerly *Compositae*) family. Relatives include chrysanthemums (*Dendranthema*), cornflowers (*Centaurea*), *Asters*, *Zinnias*, *Gerberas* and *Dahlias*.

HOME SWEET HOME *Liatris*es are native to the meadows and marshes of North America, from Eastern Canada to New Mexico.

UNUSUAL BLOOMER Unlike most linear flowers, which open from the bottoms to the tops of the spikes, the top florets of *Liatris*es open first, then blooming progresses downward.

plants. Aphids can be a problem on new growth. Control both by washing the plants with an insecticidal soap.

CAUTION Some people may be susceptible to allergic dermatitis caused by chemicals in *Liatris*es. If any problems occur, wear gloves when handling these plants. **sfr**

Some information provided by:
A. Repetto Nursery, Inc.; Half Moon Bay, Calif.
Chain of Life Network®
www.chainoflifenetWORK.org
Dave's Garden, davesgarden.com
Heritage Perennial, www.perennials.com
North Carolina State University, www.ces.ncsu.edu

Reach "Blooming Plant of the Month" writer Steven W. Brown, AIFD, at sbfloral@aol.com or (415) 239-3140.

quality checklist

BLOOMS, STEMS AND FOLIAGE Look for plants that have strong, healthy stems with at least one-third of the florets open and the rest showing color. The dark-green leaves should be narrow and soft, and new growth should be shiny. Avoid plants that are mostly new growth. Watch for any signs of bruised florets and yellow or moldy foliage.