

“Favorite Flowers of the Chesapeake Master Gardeners”

***Tradescantia virginiana* by Ceil Rochevot**

Common name: spider lily or spiderwort

Family name: Commelinaceae

Spiderwort, rather than being the “star” of the garden, would be considered to be a companion or dependable filler plant. Spiderwort behaves well in my garden and stays where it has been placed. I find it easy to care for, requiring little maintenance. I purchased one from a local nursery about 30 years ago and have divided this plant over the years to more than a dozen plants. I just love the way it looks in a light shade garden with ferns, hostas and hellebores. Spiderwort adds a pop of purple color to my shade garden. I have had mine for years and all are about 1.5 to 2 feet tall.



There are over 70 herbaceous species of *Tradescantia*. Spiderwort is an herbaceous perennial that is said to grow 1.5 to 3 feet tall and is clump forming. The native range is the Eastern United States. Spiderwort can be grown in zone 4 to 9. Bloom time is noted to be May to July, but mine typically start in April and will bloom throughout the summer. They are not considered to be heavy bloomers. Spiderwort can take part shade to full sun, although in full sun, I found the blooms close up till sunset. Spiderwort is easy to care for requiring little maintenance and can easily be divided in the fall or spring. The blooms are a purple color (other cultivars can be pinkish or white) and consists of three petals with yellow stamens. The leaves are strap like silvery-blue-green. They add a pop of color to shade gardens. There are no serious insect or disease problems noted.

It is said that the common name comes from the fact that when stem is cut, there is a secretion that becomes threadlike and silky like a spider’s web.

Photo by: Ceil Rochevot

Resource: Missouri Botanical Garden/Plant Finder

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