

# Achillea

## 'Little Moonshine'

*This petite beauty appeals to both growers and landscapers with its compact size and early bloom time.*

**BY PAUL PILON**

**A**chillea are one of the most traditional perennials used in the American landscape. With their summer-long flowering and heat and drought tolerance, yarrows are one of the most reliable perennials in production today. Recently, Must Have Perennials (formerly Blooms of Bressingham) introduced a great new achillea named 'Little Moonshine' bred by renown perennial breeder Har Stemkens of Syngenta Flowers. This exciting new cultivar has attributes which are appealing to both commercial growers and landscapers.

'Little Moonshine' is best described as a compact version of the ever so popular cultivar, 'Moonshine'. It has finely cut green-gray foliage and only reaches nine to 12 inches tall when blooming. Although its plant size is compact, the bright yellow flowers are just as large as those of 'Moonshine'.

Another appealing characteristic is its early bloom time, flowering at least two weeks earlier than its predecessor. Blooming naturally occurs in the late spring and continues throughout the summer; reblooming with lots of color occurs when the plants are sheered back once the spring flowers have faded. With its compact size, this petite beauty will not flop and will maintain a tidy appearance throughout the seasons.

Like other achillea cultivars, 'Little Moonshine' grows best in sunny locations with fertile, well-drained soils. It is hardy in Zones 4 to 8 and once established in the landscape, it has good heat and drought tolerance. Yarrow is deer resistant and a great perennial for attracting butterflies and other pollinators into the landscape. With its compact size, 'Little Moonshine' is well suited for production in containers, mixed containers, used in border plantings or as a low-growing groundcover.

### PROPAGATION

Achillea 'Little Moonshine' is vegetatively propagated by tip cuttings. It is patented (USPPAF); therefore, self-propagation without a license is prohibited. However, unrooted cuttings are available for purchase.

The cuttings should be stuck into a media or stabilized growing media which has been moistened prior to sticking. It's not necessary to use rooting hormones as they will root readily without these compounds.

Place liner trays under a low misting regiment for the first four to six days after sticking the cuttings. When possible, it is best to propagate them under high humidity levels (80 to 90 percent relative humidity) with minimal misting. The amount of mist to



provide can be reduced as the cuttings begin to develop roots. The cuttings are very susceptible to diseases during propagation; therefore, avoid misting them too frequently. Remove the misting altogether as soon as possible — once they have some roots visible and can stand up on their own throughout the day.

Maintain soil temperatures of 68 to 74° F during the rooting process. Fertilizers can be applied continuously with the mist water at 50- to 60-ppm nitrogen or applied every five to seven days using 100- to 120-ppm nitrogen. At these temperatures,

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the cuttings are usually rooted in less than three weeks and can be transplanted approximately five to six weeks from sticking.

### PRODUCTION

It is recommended to grow achillea 'Little Moonshine' in small containers such as 1-quart to 1-gallon pots. Yarrow prefers to be grown in a moist, well-drained growing mix. When transplanting, the original soil line of the liner should be even with the surface of the growing medium of the new container. They can be pinched; however, pinching is usually not necessary to produce full containers with lots of side branches.

Although they can be somewhat drought tolerant once they are established in the landscape, they typically require average amounts of irrigation while they are grown in containers. Avoid overly wet growing conditions and never let them severely wilt. When irrigation is necessary, water them thoroughly then allow the soil to dry slightly between waterings.

Achillea require light to moderate amounts of nutrients. Fertility can be provided using water-soluble fertilizers by delivering 100-ppm nitrogen plus micronutrients with each irrigation or 200-ppm nitrogen as needed.

Nutrition also can be delivered using controlled release fertilizers by incorporating the equivalent of 0.9 to 1.1 pounds of elemental nitrogen per cubic yard of growing mix before planting or topdressing using the medium labeled rate. Maintain the growing

mix throughout the production cycle with a pH between 5.8 and 6.4.

With its compact habit, it's not usually necessary to implement height management strategies when producing 'Little Moonshine.' If some toning is required, one or two spray applications of 2,500-ppm daminozide (B-Nine or Dazide) can be applied.

### INSECTS AND DISEASES

There are only a few insect pests and diseases that are likely to be observed on achillea 'Little Moonshine'. Aphids, spider mites and Botrytis are the most common problems growers are likely to observe. Other insects and diseases known to attack yarrow include leafhoppers, Western flower thrips, powdery mildew, Rhizoctonia and rust. The occurrence of these problems can be detected with routine crop monitoring and control strategies implemented if and when necessary.

### TEMPERATURE AND SCHEDULING

Achillea 'Little Moonshine' can easily be scheduled and grown to produce flowering plants for spring and early summer sales. They can be grown as a traditional perennial crop and be planted in the late summer and sold the following spring or planted during the same growing season they will be sold. I find it best to transplant large container sizes (gallons) in the late summer or early fall to allow time for bulking; this results in fuller containers and more flowers per plant. Allow six to nine weeks in the fall for bulking prior to over wintering them.

Small container sizes (quarts) can be potted in the spring.

'Little Moonshine' does not require vernalization for flowering. However, they are cold beneficial plants; cold treated plants will bloom earlier and more uniformly than those that have not been vernalized. It's recommended to only use vernalized liners planted in the spring when producing small container sizes (use non-vernalized liners when spring planting larger container sizes). They can be grown under natural day lengths and temperatures after vernalization. 'Little Moonshine' will flower in as little as four to five weeks when they are grown with 24-hour average temperatures between 63 and 68° F.

### AVAILABILITY

Achillea 'Little Moonshine' is brought to the market by Must Have Perennials. Unrooted cuttings are available from Darwin Perennials ([www.darwinperennials.com](http://www.darwinperennials.com)). Rooted liners can be purchased from several licensed propagations including Green Leaf Plants ([www.glplants.com](http://www.glplants.com)), Gulley Greenhouse Inc. ([www.gulleygreenhouse.com](http://www.gulleygreenhouse.com)), James Greenhouses Inc. ([www.jamesgreenhouses.com](http://www.jamesgreenhouses.com)) and Pioneer Gardens ([www.pioneergardens.com](http://www.pioneergardens.com)). **gpn**

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