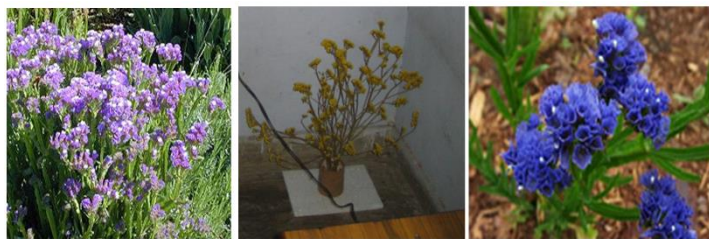


Statice: An Outstanding Dry Flower

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Statice is commonly known as Sea Lavender or Marsh Rosemary. It is originated from Mediterranean region and belongs to family Plumbaginaceae. Generic name of statice is derived from the Greek word "*Limonium*," meaning meadow and covers more than 120 species. However, the common species are *Limonium latifolium* (German Statice), *L. sinuatum* (Wavy Leaf Sea Lavender) and *L. bellidifolium* (Caspia Statice or matted Sea Lavender). In terms of flower language, statice symbolizes remembrance either for success or as sympathy, hence is an important component of wreaths and bouquets too. It is extensively used in border, beds and landscaping and is an excellent cut flower both as filler and in dry flower arrangement. Due to papery flowers, it ranks first position in dry flower industry. Flowers are very ornamental in appearance and can also be grown successfully as a potted plant. The stem stays stiff and green, hence remain intact and very attractive in dry flower arrangement. It is often used for the treatment of dysentery.

Soil and climate

Statice requires well drained and slightly acidic soil with 6-6.5 pH. It is drought, heat and salt tolerant and thrives well in average to poor soil. Sandy loam and deep soil is perfect for statice cultivation and grows well in lean and poorly nutrient condition on the drier side. Full sun exposure is an important growing requirement for statice growth. Statice needs full sun, frost-free and dry winter. The crop totally fails in frosty, snowy or rainy areas. The cool temperatures and long days promote flowering. Temperature greatly affects growth, budding and flower development. Stem elongation, leaf initiation and growth are promoted by high temperature while flower growth is promoted by low temperature.

Description

Plant is 45-60 cm tall on which branching starts at 20-30 cm height. Statice bears winged stem on which thin sword like toothed leaves are attached with dark green hue. The foliage of statice resembles that of a dandelion in size and habit, ranging from lance-shaped to slightly lobed rosettes. The petite stiff flowers of statice are actually bracts, and the true flowers are hiding inside. Tiny funnel shaped flowers are delicate and airy in appearance and blooms in spring to summer season. They are everlasting available in wide range of purple, blue, white, yellow, rose and lavender colours. Flowers are tolerant to ethylene and thus on drying remain intact on stem.

Cultivars

There are many series of statice, among which Fortress series bears thin stems and vivid colored flowers, Midnight series of statice bears deep blue flowers and QIS series produces quality seed. Hybrids between *L. latifolium* and *L. bellidifolium* include Saint Pierre, Beltlaard and the Misty series. In some varieties of statice, the flowers are initially violet, but later on change colour and become pure white. Among Fortress series Fortress Apricot (Pastel Orange), Fortress Dark Blue (Dark Blue), Fortress Heavenly Blue (Light Blue), Fortress Purple, Fortress Rose, Fortress Yellow and Fortress White are easily available in the market. Other varieties are Blue River and Mid Night (Deep Blue) along with Rose Statice, Forever Gold and American Beauty (Pink).

Propagation

Statice plants are usually propagated from seed. Since seeds of statice are tiny hence fine covering of soil after seed sowing should be done for proper germination.

Sowing

For sowing slight slope or raised beds are prepared in early September and after 55-60 days of sowing transplanting is done in main field. In Indian plains sowing of statice is done in September-October and in Indian hills it is done in March-April. Husked seeds are usually preferred for statice sowing as husked seeds helps in uniform sowing, early germination and prevents fungal diseases. In case of rainy areas, planting can be done in tray in indoor conditions. The seeds are broadcasted over a tray of

potting soil containing sterile mixture, such as 1:1:1 (by volume) of peat, sand and vermiculite. The trays should be kept moist during germination. After watering the trays is kept in dark until it begins to germinate as statice germinates in total darkness. The trays should be covered with newspaper or aluminum foil. The seed germinates in 7-10 days and seedlings becomes ready in 6-8 weeks after sowing, when the first true leaves fully develop.

Transplanting

The seedlings should be planted at a distance of 45 x 30 cm.

Management

Statice is a low maintenance plant and performs best with low management practices. However, plant needs following management practices for good production: -

- **Irrigation:** Excess watering causes statice plants to flop or prone to fungal infections. Irrigation should be given immediately after planting and the soil should be kept moist during vegetative growth. During harvesting irrigation should be stopped to prevent *Botrytis* mould.
- **Fertilization:** Too much fertilizer causes excess growth and susceptibility to insect and diseases. Application of 150 kg N and 125 kg P₂O₅ is optimum for better growth, early flowering and good flower yield. Dolomite or limestone can be used to maintain pH level of 6.0 to 6.5. During field preparation organic manures should be added generously.
- **Weeding:** In statice production, the most acceptable herbicides are Oxidiazon, EPTC and DCPA. Plastic mulching can be successfully used to control weeds.
- **Stacking:** When the plant become vigorous due to higher branching and blooming, immediately stacking should be done with the help of bamboo sticks. This protects from plant lodging and provides extra support to the plant in case of higher yield.
- **Diseases:** The major foliage and flower diseases are *Anthraco*, *Cercospora* and *Botrytis*. Crown rots may be caused by *Colletotrichum*, *Rhizoctonia* and southern blight is due to *Sclerotium rolfsii*. The alternate combinations of fungicides, insecticides and acaricides in every 10 to 14 days for statice should be used as a preventive measure. *Botrytis* is a fungus that attacks the flowers under high humidity. It appears as beige-brownish colourations. The symptoms of *Botrytis* can be

seen in flowering period of statice, when a few florets fall at early stage only. White statice always gets affected first. The cure is to remove all the ruined flower stalks. Many fungicides control *Botrytis*. To maintain a clean crop in greenhouse, watering, heating and ventilating techniques should be combined to keep the atmospheric humidity as low as possible at all times and this helps in maintaining a clean crop in greenhouse

- **Insect pest:** The primary insect that attacks the plants is the Tarnished Plant Bug, a small, flitting insect that sucks plant juice from flower buds and in return deposits toxic saliva on plants. The initial result is malformed flowers with discolorations. A large infestation of these bugs slowly kills the plants. For this prevention, Malathion should be applied @ 1 ml/l in early stage. Army worms, cut worms and loopers usually attack the tender terminal growth. Spider mites cause the most serious damage to statice if appeared in large population on the underside of the leaves.

Harvesting of the crop

Statice can be harvested for many times during the season. Each time flowers should be harvested when 75 percent of the calyces show colour. The stems should be cut with knives or scissors as low as possible to the plant without removing leaves. Stems should be dipped into a bactericide solution (such as Consan at 200 ppm) immediately after harvest to prevent stem decay and increase water uptake. Stems should be left in warm (20°C) water overnight before the stems into bunches.

Dehydration of statice

Picking of statice flowers for drying requires care. Generally, the flowers should be picked when it is 3/4 opened. The florets continue to open as they dry and the stem should be cut at least 30-45 cm from the base of the flower. All the leaves should be removed. The flowers should be picked when the desired colour is on peak, because the colour of harvesting stage will retain as such until the flowers expose to direct sun light. Since statice flowers bears a small white "petal" in between which usually disappears on drying. Hence to get the white petal intact with the contrast-colored florets, this flower should be dried with air drying method in a cool, ventilated and dark room. In this method flowers should be hanged upside down for 7-10 days, unless it is completely dried. If by mistake the flower stem becomes too brittle on over drying then it can be misted with plain water to bring back its flexibility. Air drying is the preferred method for large-scale drying operations. Most plants dry best

when tied in bunches and hung upside down by removing all leaves. Six to ten stems ends are tied together about two inches from the stem ends with the help of a rubber band.

Arrangement of Dry Flowers

Dried statice flowers can easily be used in seasonal wreaths or door swags. Short-stemmed flower stems can be grouped and arranged very low

and flat in a shallow tray or other container, using the stylish pave technique whereas taller stems can be massed together to create a hedgerow effect. Dried flowers can be tightly arranged in concentric rings of a single variety. After arranging the dried flowers, it should be kept away from sunlight, excessive heat, humidity and dust to prevent colour fading. Dried flowers should be cleaned regularly by blowing off the dust using a hair dryer.

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