

Front Lines

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A Late Bloomer

Jeb S. Fields



It's official—we haven't even hit 2027 yet, but the Perennial Plant Association has voted that Vernonia Summer's Swan Song is the 2027 Perennial Plant of the Year.

For those not in the know, vernonia is more commonly known as ironweed. This is a pollinator-friendly native perennial that brings a bit of wildness into gardens. This particular cultivar brings late-season excitement into the landscape in a more manageable package than other ironweeds.

This plant is covered in sprays of dark purple flowers that pop from early September through October, playing to its name—keeping summer going just a bit. It's a magnet for bees and butterflies in a time of the year

where there might not always be the most ideal food sources, so this provides extra ecological support.

Summer's Swan Song originated as a cross between *V. lettermannii* and *V. angustifolia*. It loves the full sun and can manage a wide range of soil moistures. A fantastic plant for nearly any space.

The Perennial Plant of the Year Program has been running strong since 1990. Visit perennialplantoftheyear.com for details on how the Plant of the Year is chosen and for more information on this and other previous winners. **GP**