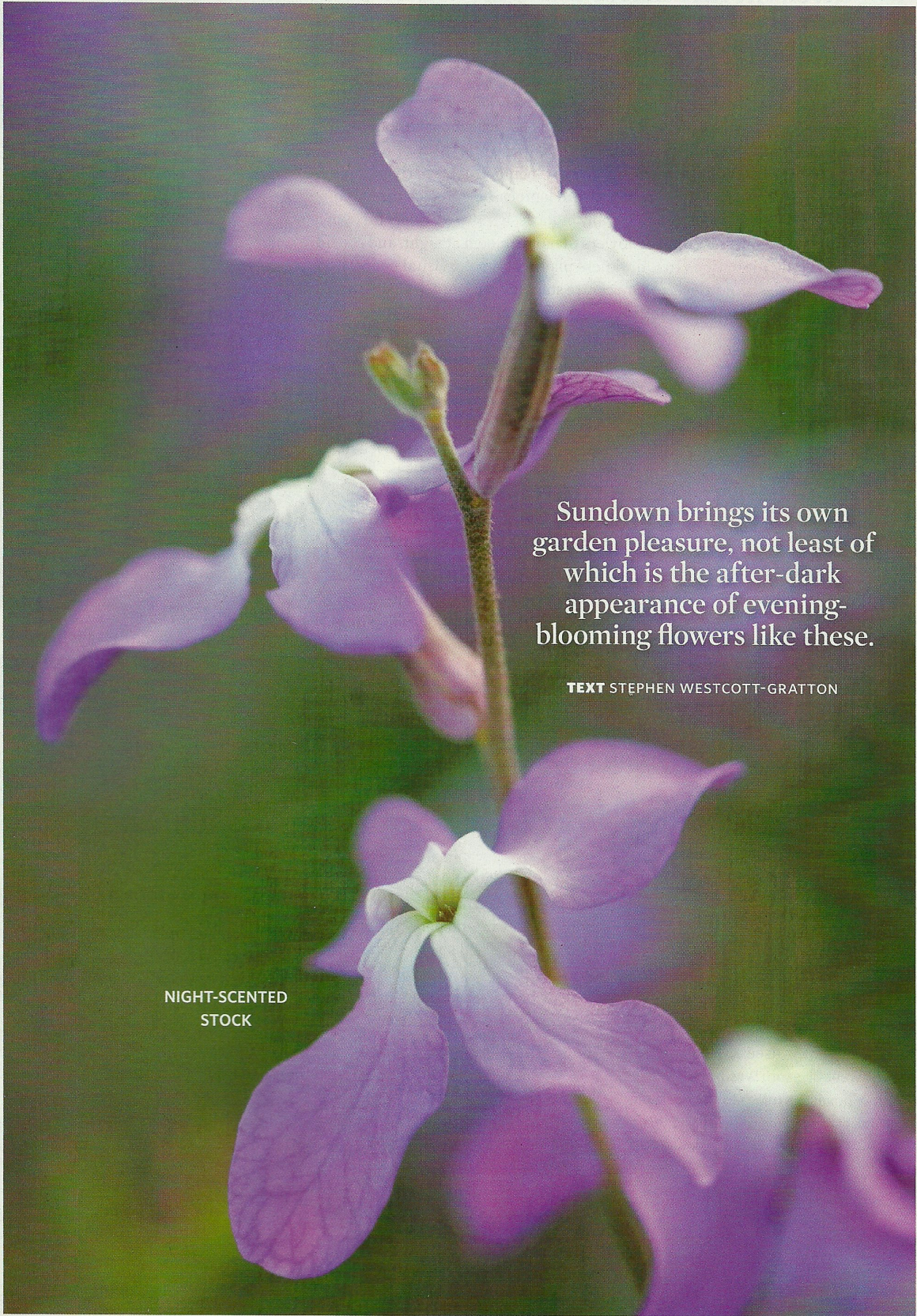


UP CLOSE

SWEET-SCENTED  
NICOTIANA

*the  
night*  
CLUB



Sundown brings its own garden pleasure, not least of which is the after-dark appearance of evening-blooming flowers like these.

**TEXT** STEPHEN WESTCOTT-GRATTON

NIGHT-SCENTED  
STOCK

## Given the fact that so many gardeners have nine-to-five Monday-to-Friday careers – often with a lengthy commute tacked on at either end –

it's surprising that more properties aren't designed to be evening friendly. Fortunately, it's an easy fix: By adding just a few key plants, you can enjoy your outdoor space on weeknights as well as weekends without having to add a fuse-box full of electric lighting.

White-flowered plants show up best by moonlight, perhaps supplemented with a few strategically placed lanterns to enhance the calming effect the evening garden inevitably induces. It's also a wonderful opportunity to explore a group of flowers that only bloom at night, and considering the limitations that darkness places upon our visual perception, fragrance should always share centre stage, becoming as valuable a cast member in the sundown garden as the flowers themselves.

### MOONFLOWER

(*IPOMOEA ALBA*)

Night-blooming moonflowers (closely related to day-blooming morning glories) bear ghostly white 15-centimetre-wide fragrant flowers that open at dusk in slow motion, going from tightly closed buds to fully open flowers in about 20 minutes – or one glass of wine – and remaining open until the following morning. Perennial pantropical twining vines, moonflowers require a support structure (trellis or arbour) to climb and are hardy to 7°C; in Canada we treat them as warm-season annuals.

Transplant moonflower seedlings to flowerbeds or containers at the same time tomato seedlings are moved outdoors. Preferring average garden loam in a full sun position, moonflowers are pollinated by night-flying moths and can grow up to five metres in a single season.

### SWEET ALYSSUM

(*LOBULARIA MARITIMA* CVS.)

Many gardeners have vivid memories of old-fashioned flowerbeds edged with miles and miles of sweet alyssum. But long before it was used as a bedding plant, sweet alyssum was popular in window boxes, as much for its perfume as its dainty racemes of flowers. Placed beside an open window, just a few plants can fill a room with delicious aroma.

Salt-tolerant sweet alyssum is available in shades of pink, rose, apricot and purple, but cultivars with white flowers show up better at night, have a stronger fragrance and grow more vigorously than multi-hued types. A cool-season

annual native to the Mediterranean, sweet alyssum grows 12 centimetres tall by 25 centimetres wide and prefers good garden loam in a full sun location.

### NIGHT-SCENTED STOCK (MATTHIOLA LONG-IPETALA SSP. BICORNIS AND CVS.)

Seemingly more akin to a bashful wildflower than a cultivated plant, night-scented stock will never win first prize at a flower show, given its rather rangy habit, grey-green leaves and racemes of two-centimetre-wide flowers in shades of pink, mauve and purple. Instead, it's grown for its heavenly honey-scented blooms, which begin to release their perfume in the afternoon, the fragrance becoming progressively stronger as darkness approaches.

A self-seeding annual native from Greece to southwest Asia, night-scented stock grows 30 centimetres tall by 20 centimetres wide and performs best in rich, well-drained soil in a full sun to part shade location. Tuck it into containers or plant among showier unscented flowers in herbaceous borders.

### FOUR O'CLOCKS

(*MIRABILIS JALAPA* AND CVS.)

A tender tuberous perennial from Central and South America, *Mirabilis jalapa* was brought from Peru to Spain in the 16th century, and was already well known in England when John Gerard wrote his *Herball* in 1597. The Elizabethans were fascinated by a plant that often bore flowers of different colours (white, pink, red, magenta and yellow) on the same

specimen, as well as randomly striped and flecked bicoloured blooms. As the common name suggests, sweetly fragrant four o'clocks open in the afternoon, closing at dawn the following day.

Four o'clocks grow 50 centimetres tall and wide and require a full sun location in rich, well-drained soil. Flowering from early to late summer, they're easy to grow from seed and may be moved outdoors with the tomatoes. In autumn, tag favourite bicoloured plants and dig up the tubers to overwinter indoors.

### SWEET-SCENTED NICOTIANA

(*NICOTIANA ALATA*)

A tender perennial native to Brazil and Argentina, night-blooming *Nicotiana alata* is the most powerfully fragrant of all the ornamental tobaccos. Treated as a warm-season annual in Canada, it grows 120 centimetres tall by 30 centimetres wide and prospers in rich, well-drained soil in a full sun position.

Blooming from midsummer until frost, *N. alata* produces open racemes of nodding, star-shaped white to chartreuse flowers, and individual plants resemble a giant candelabra – the perfect focal point for an evening garden. Dwarf forms of *N. alata* are available in a range of colours, but usually lack the intense fragrance of the species form.

### 'MISSOURI' NIGHT-BLOOMING TROPICAL WATERLILY

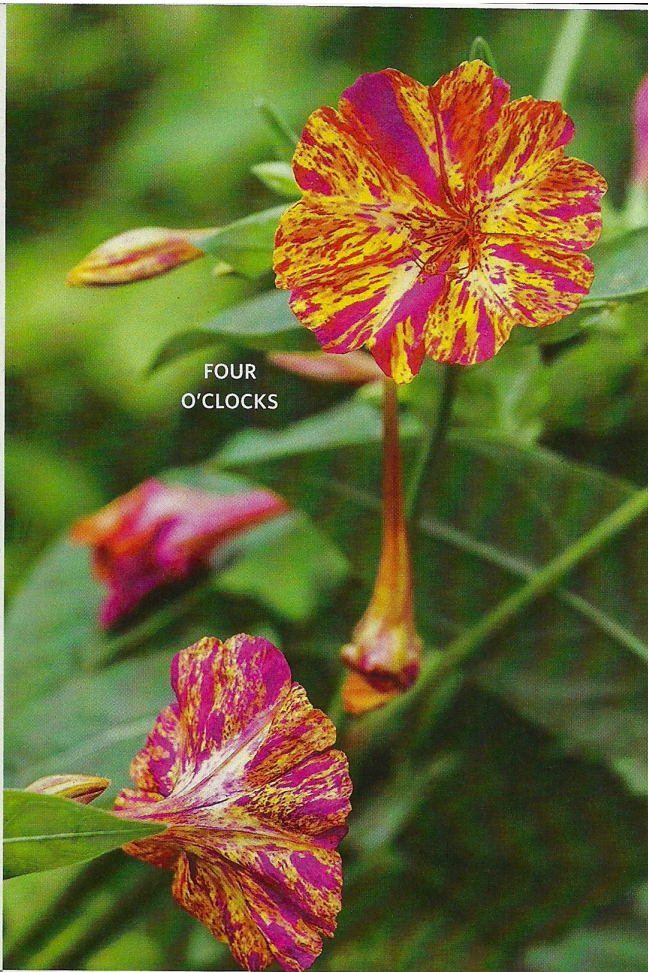
(*NYPHAEA 'MISSOURI'*)

Day-blooming waterlilies may be either hardy or tropical, but night-blooming types are all tropical. Tropical waterlilies may be grown in ponds or large containers, and in Canada should be treated as annuals or overwintered indoors. They require a minimum water temperature of 24°C, open at dusk and remain open until noon the following day.

'Missouri' is the result of a cross between 'Mrs. George C. Hitchcock' and 'Sturtevantii', made by Englishman Dr. George H. Pring at the Missouri Botanical Garden and introduced in 1932. It bears intoxicatingly fragrant 30-centimetre-wide white flowers from midsummer until frost.



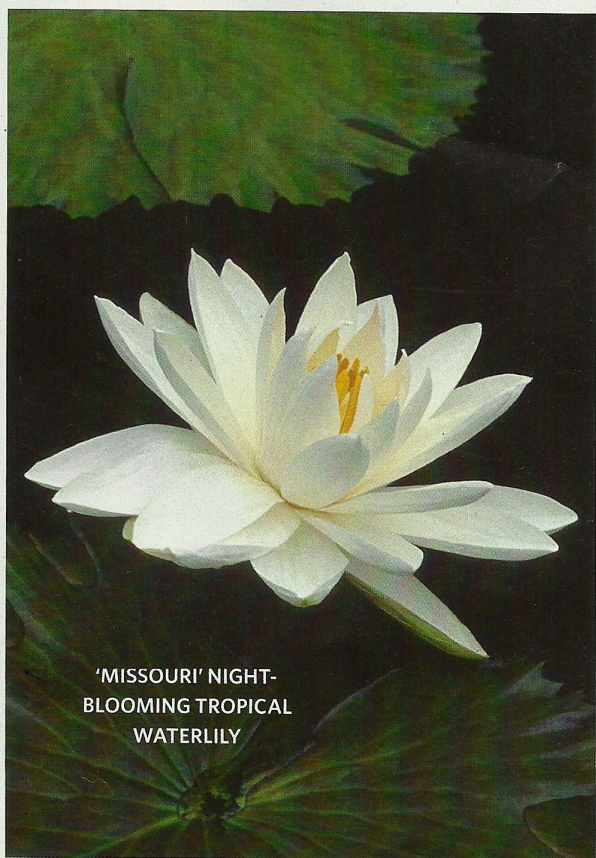
MOONFLOWER



FOUR  
O'CLOCKS



SWEET ALYSSUM



'MISSOURI' NIGHT-  
BLOOMING TROPICAL  
WATERLILY

Canadian GARDENING

Magazine  
Subscribe  
Renew  
Gift Subscription

E-Newsletters  
Polls & Quizzes  
Canadian Gardening Store

Forums  
Blog  
Twitter  
Contests

RSS Contact Us

Search for:



Magazine



July 2015 Issue:  
Escape to your garden

[Table of Contents](#) [Online Articles](#) [Browse Back Issues](#)

This summer escape to your garden: a real secret garden in B.C, smart sun-care, no-waste watering tips, colourful floral arrangements, the best garden phlox and much more!

BUY THIS ISSUE

SUBSCRIBE NOW

RECENT BACK ISSUES

ADVERTISER INDEX



September 2015  
BUY THIS ISSUE



July 2015  
BUY THIS ISSUE



May 2015  
BUY THIS ISSUE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

IN EVERY ISSUE

4 From the Editor

6 Feedback

7 Canadiangardening.com

74 #cgfloweroftheday

COLUMNS

9 CG Market

Fresh ideas and products for better gardening

14 Healthy Ingredient

The buzz about bee products

15 Smoothie of the Month

A sweet honey smoothie with tangy muddled blueberries

16 Natural Beauty

Protect against sun-related aging with nourishing borage

18 Stephen Speaks

Senior horticulture editor Stephen Westcott-Gratton explains the hive of activity around bees this summer