Colchian Barrenwort

Epimedium pinnatum var. colchicum



Colchian Barrenwort flowers
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Plant Height: 10 inches

Flower Height: 14 inches

Spread: 24 inches

Spacing: 20 inches

Sunlight: ◐ ●

Hardiness Zone: 4

Other Names: Bishop's Hat, Fairy Wings, Elf Orchid

Description:

Bright yellow, nodding orchid-like flowers in spring; makes a great shade groundcover; attractive evergreen foliage is olive green in summer, transitioning to copper-burgundy in the fall and winter

Ornamental Features

Colchian Barrenwort features delicate nodding yellow orchid-like flowers with burgundy throats rising above the foliage from early to late spring. Its attractive heart-shaped leaves are olive green in color with hints of yellow. As an added bonus, the foliage turns gorgeous shades of coppery-bronze and in the fall.



Colchian Barrenwort in bloom
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Landscape Attributes

Colchian Barrenwort is a dense herbaceous evergreen perennial with a ground-hugging habit of growth. Its relatively fine texture sets it apart from other garden plants with less refined foliage.

This plant will require occasional maintenance and upkeep, and is best cleaned up in early spring before it resumes active growth for the season. It is a good choice for attracting bees to your yard, but is not particularly attractive to deer who tend to leave it alone in favor of tastier treats. Gardeners should be aware of the following characteristic(s) that may warrant special consideration;

- Spreading

Colchian Barrenwort is recommended for the following landscape applications;

- Mass Planting
- Border Edging
- General Garden Use
- Groundcover
- Naturalizing And Woodland Gardens
- Container Planting

Planting & Growing

Colchian Barrenwort will grow to be about 10 inches tall at maturity extending to 14 inches tall with the flowers, with a spread of 24 inches. When grown in masses or used as a bedding plant, individual plants should be spaced approximately 20 inches apart. Its foliage tends to remain low and dense right to the ground. It grows at a medium rate, and under ideal conditions can be expected to live for approximately 10 years. As an evegreen perennial, this plant will typically keep its form and foliage year-round.

This plant does best in partial shade to full shade. Keep it well away from hot, dry locations that receive direct afternoon sun or which get reflected sunlight, such as against the south side of a white wall. It is very adaptable to both dry and moist growing conditions, but will not tolerate any standing water. It is considered to be drought-tolerant, and thus makes an ideal choice for a low-water garden or xeriscape application. It is not particular as to soil pH, but grows best in rich soils. It is somewhat tolerant of urban pollution. Consider covering it with a thick layer of mulch in winter to protect it in exposed locations or colder microclimates. This species is not originally from North America. It can be propagated by division.

Colchian Barrenwort is a fine choice for the garden, but it is also a good selection for planting in outdoor pots and containers. Because of its spreading habit of growth, it is ideally suited for use as a 'spiller' in the 'spiller-thriller-filler' container combination; plant it near the edges where it can spill gracefully over the pot. Note that when growing plants in outdoor containers and baskets, they may require more frequent waterings than they would in the yard or garden.