Chilean Wintergreen

Gaultheria mucronata

Height: 4 feet

Spread: 4 feet

Sunlight: ○ ◐

Hardiness Zone: 6

Other Names: Boxberry, Prickly Heath, Pernettya mucronata

Description:

A good shrub for highly acidic, sandy and poor soils; small, white to pink, urn-shaped flowers in spring, bright pink, white, or claret red berries in fall that persist into winter; pointed, glossy dark green foliage may turn bronzy in winter



Chilean Wintergreen flowers
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Ornamental Features

Chilean Wintergreen features dainty nodding white bell-shaped flowers at the ends of the branches from mid spring to early summer. It features an abundance of magnificent pink berries from early fall to mid winter, which fade to red over time. It has dark green evergreen foliage. The small fragrant pointy leaves turn coppery-bronze in the fall, which persists throughout the winter.



Chilean Wintergreen foliage
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Landscape Attributes

Chilean Wintergreen is a multi-stemmed evergreen shrub with a mounded form. Its relatively fine texture sets it apart from other landscape plants with less refined foliage.

This is a relatively low maintenance shrub, and should not require much pruning, except when necessary, such as to remove dieback. It is a good choice for attracting birds to your yard, but is not particularly attractive to deer who tend to leave it alone in favor of tastier treats. It has no significant negative characteristics.

Chilean Wintergreen is recommended for the following landscape applications;

- Accent
- Mass Planting
- General Garden Use
- Container Planting

Planting & Growing

Chilean Wintergreen will grow to be about 4 feet tall at maturity, with a spread of 4 feet. It tends to fill out right to the ground and therefore doesn't necessarily require facer plants in front. It grows at a medium rate, and under ideal conditions can be expected to live for approximately 20 years. This is a female variety of the species which requires a male selection of the same species growing nearby in order to set fruit.

This shrub does best in full sun to partial shade. It requires an evenly moist well-drained soil for optimal growth, but will die in standing water. It may require supplemental watering during periods of drought or extended heat. It is very fussy about its soil conditions and must have rich, acidic soils to ensure success, and is subject to chlorosis (yellowing) of the foliage in alkaline soils. It is somewhat tolerant of urban pollution, and will benefit from being planted in a relatively sheltered location. Consider applying a thick mulch around the root zone in winter to protect it in exposed locations or colder microclimates. This species is not originally from North America.

Chilean Wintergreen makes a fine choice for the outdoor landscape, but it is also well-suited for use in outdoor pots and containers. Because of its height, it is often used as a 'thriller' in the 'spiller-thriller-filler' container combination; plant it near the center of the pot, surrounded by smaller plants and those that spill over the edges. It is even sizeable enough that it can be grown alone in a suitable container. Note that when grown in a container, it may not perform exactly as indicated on the tag - this is to be expected. Also note that when growing plants in outdoor containers and baskets, they may require more frequent waterings than they would in the yard or garden.