

Discover the Tiarella

Tiarella's common name is "foam flower", but this delicate shady lady is anything but common. She likes her roots moist, tucked into a bed of organic humus. Beware of soggy soil in winter, however, which will do her in. She comes from the Saxifragaceae family and sports dainty feathery flower stems from white to several shades of pink in spring. While native forms spread by runners, hybrids form large clumps which can be divided after a few years.



In its native form, the Tiarella was used by Native Americans as a mouthwash for "white coated tongue", mouth sores and eye ailments. It is high in tannin, so has been used for its astringent properties in treating diarrhea and in dressing wounds and sores.

Leaf forms range from rounded to variations of deeply lobed or cut. Several available species include "cordifolia" (heartleaved) and "trifoliata" (three-leaved). The cordifolia form of this plant will spread by runners. Hybrids form large clumps for dividing. There are many hybrids available, with striking coloration of the leaves and patterns along the veins. "Heronwood Mist" is an exceptionally nice one. The new leaves emerge pink and turn mottled shades of greens, pink, and white, as they mature.

Given the right growing conditions, the Tiarella is a virtually maintenance free perennial. Slugs are its worst enemy. If you're looking for a shady garden complimentary texture, it is a great companion plant to hostas, columbine, solomon's seal, violets, huechera, and ferns. Since it's low growing (generally 6-8") it looks great toward the front of a border.

When dividing your Tiarella babies from the mother plant, carefully separate the individual plant segments you see coming off of the main stem. When planting the divisions, it is critical to keep the crown of the new plants at or just above soil level. If the crown is buried beneath the soil, the plant will rot. Within a few weeks you'll have small leaves emerging from the crown, and roots will form below the soil.

All this lady asks for is a small space in the front of your shady perennial garden border and she won't disappoint with a colorful spring surprise.



*White Coated Tongue is a symptom of what doctors call Oral Thrush which is a fungal infection, and is not uncommon in newborn babies. As the name implies, people with this condition have painless white patches in their mouths and throat.

Resources

2bnTheWild.com, retrieved 9/23/2006.

Brickell, Christopher; Zuk, Judith D.; Editors in Chief; *The American Horticultural Society A-Z Encyclopedia of Garden Plants*, DK Publishing, Inc., NY, 1997.

[Renewed HealthCompany](http://RenewedHealthCompany.com), retrieved 10/9/2006.