

## A Light, Feathery Native

Are you looking for a tall, native plant for the back of a border garden? If so, *Aruncus dioicus* is a good choice. *Aruncus*, a Greek word meaning 'goat's beard', gives it one of its common names, the other being 'bride's feathers'. These names refer to the plumes of creamy white flowers on thin stems that rise above the foliage (similar to *Astilbe* flowers). Goat's beard is not salt-tolerant. It is non-invasive and pairs well with ferns and other shade-loving plants.

Goat's beard is a herbaceous perennial suitable for zones 4-8. It blooms during late spring/early summer and attracts many pollinators such as butterflies, bees, flies, beetles, and wasps. Besides being a nectar plant, *Aruncus* is also a host plant for the Dusky Azure butterfly. This plant prefers rich, moisture-retentive soil, but will grow in most soils if kept evenly moist. Leaf tips will brown if soil dries out. It does best in partial shade to sun. Slow growing the first few years, it is clump-forming and matures to 2-4 feet wide and 4-6 feet in height. When planting, leave enough space around it for growth.

Besides the flowers, goat's beard has attractive airy, fern-like foliage. The leaves are dark green, large and pinnately compound. It has fall interest with seed pods that hang in golden green clusters. There are male and female plants with only slight differences in growth or appearance.

Deadhead spent flowers. Cut stems down to 1-2 inches at the end of the season. Mulch with compost. The roots are deep and woody, so it is not easily divided, but may be done in spring by digging up the whole clump and separating it before replanting the divisions.

There are only a few named cultivars. Shorter cultivars include 'Chantilly Lace'; 'Kneiffli', which has more delicate foliage; and 'Zweiweltenkind', also called 'Child of Two Worlds', which has drooping white flowers and is sturdier so it is good for windy locations. These cultivars grow to about 3 feet in height. 'Misty Lace' is a compact variety (2 feet) developed at the University of Georgia. 'Glasnevin' is a very compact plant, growing to only 1 foot, and is good for rock gardens.

## Checklist for November

### Flower and Vegetable Garden

- ✓ Water perennial beds thoroughly before the ground freezes.
- ✓ Pre-chill tulips and hyacinths for indoor forcing. [Rutgers FS1220](#)
- ✓ Take cuttings of annuals selected for propagation.

### Indoor Plants

- ✓ Check indoor plants to ensure they are receiving enough water, humidity and air circulation. [UMD Factsheet](#)
- ✓ Check for spider mites and scale. [PSU Factsheet](#)
- ✓ Cut back on feeding of houseplants.

### Trees and Shrubs

- ✓ Fertilize shade trees after leaf fall. [Rutgers FS031](#)
- ✓ Fill and hang bird feeders.

### Lawn

- ✓ Rake and compost shredded leaves. [Rutgers FS074](#)
- ✓ Continue to mow lawns. The last cut should be 2½ inches high.
- ✓ Do not fertilize lawn after November 15<sup>th</sup>, as per New Jersey Fertilizer Law. [DEP Tips](#)

