



Chicagoland Grows®, Inc.



Plant Introduction Program – Plant Release Bulletin #54

***Vernonia* Hybrid**
'Summer's End' Ironweed PP33,602
Asteraceae (Aster family)

Chicagoland Grows® is pleased to follow up on previous *Vernonia* releases with a third hybrid ironweed known as 'Summer's End'. It is intermediate in size compared to the two previous releases and is similarly a highly upright cultivar with no stem lodging. Inflorescences are abundant and form a mass of flowers that consistently attract pollinators. 'Summer's End' is drought tolerant and disease resistant and should provide a vibrant, lively presence to any garden late in the growing season under sunny conditions and in well-drained soils.

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Origin

A controlled crossing program focused on *Vernonia* started at the Chicago Botanic Garden in 2010 after the Garden's plant evaluation program first began evaluating the genus in 2006. 'Summer's End' was derived from a controlled cross between the unpatented cultivar *V. lettermanii* 'Iron Butterfly' and an unnamed, unpatented *V. larseniae* accession made in September 2012. This hybrid was selected for release by Jim Ault, Ph.D., in October 2015 based on its desirable habit and superior performance.

Hardiness

USDA Zones 4-8

Bloom Season

'Summer's End' blooms for six weeks from early September to mid-October in northern Illinois (USDA Zone 5), extending the flower show much later in the growing season than many other garden plants.

Plant Habit

Like previous *Vernonia* releases from Chicagoland Grows, 'Summer's End' has a bushy upright habit with stems that do not lodge. As stems grow upwards, they angle out slightly, making this cultivar wider at its top than its base. Because most stems reach a similar height, a blanket of inflorescences form that can be furthered by massing plants together.

Growth Rate and Size

In-ground 'Summer's End' plants grew to 41 inches tall and 37 inches wide by year three and 42 inches tall and 41 inches wide by year five. Plants have not grown significantly further in subsequent years.

Pest/Disease Issues

'Summer's End' is highly resistant to rust (*Coleosporium* sp.) and powdery mildew (*Golovinomyces* sp.). No pest or disease issues have been observed.

Culture

While most ironweed taxa are found in mesic habitats, *V. lettermanii*, one of the parents of 'Summer's End', can be found in drier rocky uplands. 'Summer's End' appears to have inherited tolerance to both high soil moisture and drought, though plants perform best in well-drained soil with uniform moisture availability. Mulch can be used to preserve moisture in drier soils. Plants also do best in full sun with good air circulation and should not require staking. Winter stems remain upright and rarely break off. Old stems can be pruned away in early spring.

Propagation

Readily propagated by shoot tip cuttings taken in June in northern Illinois (USDA Zone 5). Mid-stem cuttings can also be effective if they are not too mature. Provide cuttings with a 5-second treatment of 1,000 ppm K-IBA and stick in well-drained rooting medium. Because root systems are vigorous, it is best to place cuttings in larger cells like an SVD 2.5-inch pot, then transplant to larger containers for further growing or overwintering.

Ornamental Characteristics/Landscape Value

'Summer's End' begins to show interest during the summer months as it grows into its uniform, upright habit while displaying its thin, wispy foliage. It is most attractive in bloom during late summer to early fall when few other perennials are in bloom. The abundant inflorescences attract a wealth of pollinators. With its size falling in between the previous *Vernonia* releases 'Summer's Surrender' and 'Summer's Swan Song', this selection has a place in gardens of all sizes.

Chicagoland Grows® is a nonprofit corporation of the Chicago Botanic Garden, The Morton Arboretum, and the Ornamental Growers Association of Northern Illinois (OGA). The Chicagoland Grows® Plant Introduction Program is dedicated to the evaluation, selection, production, and marketing of recommended and new plant cultivars. Plants selected for the program have proven to be adaptable to the Midwest and are made available to the commercial and retail landscape industry through an international network of growers and propagators.

