Para Cress

Spilanthes oleracea



Para Cress flowers
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Height: 18 inches

Spread: 15 inches

Spacing: 12 inches

Sunlight: ○ ◐

Hardiness Zone: (annual)

Other Names: Eyeball Plant, Toothache Plant, Peek-a-boo Plant

Description:

An interesting plant that produces unusual, round yellow flowers with a burgundy dot in the center; flowers appear on spikes in mid-summer and persist until fall; leaves are edible; an interesting addition to the garden



Para Cress in bloom
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Ornamental Features

Para Cress features showy spikes of yellow ball-shaped flowers with burgundy eyes at the ends of the stems from mid summer to mid fall. Its glossy oval leaves remain green in colour throughout the season. The brick red stems can be quite attractive.

Landscape Attributes

Para Cress is an herbaceous annual with a mounded form. Its medium texture blends into the garden, but can always be balanced by a couple of finer or coarser plants for an effective composition.

This is a relatively low maintenance plant, and should not require much pruning, except when necessary, such as to remove dieback. Deer don't particularly care for this plant and will usually leave it alone in favor of tastier treats. It has no significant negative characteristics.

Para Cress is recommended for the following landscape applications;

- Accent
- General Garden Use
- Herb Gardens
- Container Planting

Planting & Growing

Para Cress will grow to be about 14 inches tall at maturity, with a spread of 15 inches. When grown in masses or used as a bedding plant, individual plants should be spaced approximately 12 inches apart. Its foliage tends to remain dense right to the ground, not requiring facer plants in front. Although it's not a true annual, this fast-growing plant can be expected to behave as an annual in our climate if left outdoors over the winter, usually needing replacement the following year. As such, gardeners should take into consideration that it will perform differently than it would in its native habitat.

This plant does best in full sun to partial shade. It prefers to grow in average to moist conditions, and shouldn't be allowed to dry out. It is not particular as to soil type or pH. It is somewhat tolerant of urban pollution. This species is not originally from North America.

Para Cress is a fine choice for the garden, but it is also a good selection for planting in outdoor pots and containers. It is often used as a 'filler' in the 'spiller-thriller-filler' container combination, providing a mass of flowers against which the thriller plants stand out. Note that when growing plants in outdoor containers and baskets, they may require more frequent waterings than they would in the yard or garden.