

Swan Series Columbine (*Aquilegia*)

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Swan Series Columbine (*Aquilegia*)

- **Recommended Use:** Cool-season bedding plant, border plant, cut flowers and bouquets
- **Exposure:** Full sun to part shade
- **Size:** 20 to 24 inches tall, 12 inches wide
- **Habit:** Upright
- **Bloom Time:** Spring
- **Maintenance Category:** Low
- **Water Use:** Moderate
- **Highlights:** Cold hardy plant offering cool-season color, beautiful foliage texture, and striking complex blooms.



The Swan series columbine has varieties in many striking color combinations. LSU AgCenter file photo

Summary

Well known as a perennial in many northern climates, columbine makes an elegant annual addition to the cool-season southern garden. Columbine typically features beautiful deep green, parsley-like leaves in addition to complex, two-toned, bell-shaped flowers.

Beyond its outstanding performance during LSU cool-season trials, the Swan series is more vigorous in growth and produces larger blooms than many other columbine varieties. Because it is adapted to colder climates, gardeners do not have to fret about protecting it from winter frost. In fact, columbine often embraces this cool weather. Planting columbine in the fall often produces the best spring bloom display. Flowers will begin to appear atop tall spikes rising above the foliage in March, with blooms consisting of five prominent, colored sepals with five tubular petals, oftentimes varying in color, in front of them. The individual petals narrow to a sharp point, otherwise known as a spur, which protrude behind the flower and secrete nectar. The Swan series has varieties in many striking sepal-petal color combinations, including blue and white, burgundy and white, pink and yellow, rose and white, and several other tantalizing tandems. In addition to providing cool-season color in the landscape, the flower spikes make excellent cut flowers, bolstering bouquets with a unique two-tone touch.

Columbine can be planted through the end of February and often blooms until the start of summer, right around May. Columbines prefer well-drained soil and bloom happily in partial shade as well as full sun. Non-flowering transplants can easily be found in nurseries across Louisiana in the fall, with more mature transplants becoming available as winter progresses to spring.

Swan series columbines have very few pest problems if established in well-drained soil and are fairly resistant to deer. Once the summer heat sets in, plants will begin to deteriorate and replacement with summer annuals is recommended.



Columbine can be planted through the end of February and often blooms until the start of summer.



The Swan series produces larger blooms than many other columbine varieties. LSU AgCenter file photos

Requirements

- Plant in a sunny to partly shady location with excellent drainage.
- Work organic matter into the upper 2 inches of soil before planting.
- Ideal soil pH is slightly acidic or between 5.8 and 6.5.
- Space plants 12 inches apart.
- Plant from October to February.

Growth Habit

- Mounding parsley-like foliage spreads to about 12 inches wide.
- Tall bloom spikes appear in March, reaching 20 to 24 inches tall.

Care and Maintenance

- Fertilize with general purpose fertilizer at planting, with monthly follow-ups if needed.
- Remove faded flower spikes to maintain appearance.
- Cold hardy throughout Louisiana, this plant is no stranger to winter seasons.
- Remove in early summer as the plants succumb to heat.

For more information on Swan series columbine and other Louisiana Super Plants, contact your local LSU AgCenter Extension office or visit LSUAgCenter.com/SuperPlants.



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