

Chicagoland Grows,® Inc.

Plant Release Bulletin #46

NEW FOR 2018–2019

Chicagoland Grows®, Inc., presents Blue Sprite Speedwell (*Veronica* 'Blue Sprite' PPAF)

The Chicagoland Grows® plant introduction program is pleased to announce its latest speedwell introduction, *Veronica* 'Blue Sprite'. This diminutive yet durable speedwell blooms from early or mid-June until mid-July in USDA Zone 5, packing its violet flowers on dense flower stems only 6 inches tall. The plants are equally dense with fine, olive-green foliage on creeping rhizomes. Two-year-old trial plants measured only 10 inches wide by 1 inch tall. Equally tough as it is attractive, 'Blue Sprite' is highly disease-resistant, drought-tolerant, and hardy to USDA Zone 4. For full sun and well-drained soils. Developed at the Chicago Botanic Garden.

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Blue Sprite Speedwell (*Veronica* 'Blue Sprite' PPAF)



Botanic Name

Veronica 'Blue Sprite' PPAF

Common Name

Blue Sprite Speedwell

Family

Plantaginaceae (plantain family) (formerly Scrophulariaceae)

Origin

Developed by Dr. Jim Ault at the Chicago Botanic Garden from open-pollinated seed collected in 2007 from an unnamed selection of *Veronica allionii*. The pollen parent was unknown, but presumably was one of the adjacent speedwell cultivars under evaluation. The seed was germinated in 2008, seedlings were planted out that year, and the selection was made in 2009. The original plant was propagated in 2010, and then trial plants were evaluated in-ground for five years at the Chicago Botanic Garden (USDA Zone 5).

Previous *Veronica* Introductions

Veronica 'Whitewater', discovered by John Wachter, Elite Growers, Ingleside, Illinois, and *Veronica* 'Tidal Pool', developed by Dr. Jim Ault at the Chicago Botanic Garden.

Hardiness

Likely cold-hardy to USDA Hardiness Zones 4 to 7 and heat-tolerant to AHS Zones 4 to 7. The foliage is evergreen in mild winters. In severe winters, the foliage may be deciduous but the plants revegetate readily in spring.

Bloom Season

The 6-inch inflorescences bloom for five to six weeks, typically from early or mid-June to mid-July in northern Illinois (USDA Zone 5). Secondary inflorescence branches extended the bloom season by a week-plus in comparison to comparable compact speedwells. No reblooming was observed.

Plant Habit

A low, dense, creeping habit. Plants consist of wiry, creeping rhizomes with short upright vegetative stems bearing numerous olive-green leaves, and compact upright inflorescences. This selection is akin to the upright speedwells such as *Veronica spicata*, but is much more compact.

Growth Rate and Size

A moderate growth rate, even by speedwell standards. Two-year-old trial plants measured 1 inch tall and 10 inches wide, and 4-year-old trial plants measured 1 inch tall and 18 inches wide.

Ornamental Characteristics and Landscape Value

Grow this selection for its attractive violet flowers in early summer, its clean olive-green foliage on well-behaved, low creeping plants, and for its red-tinted foliage in autumn and early winter. Durable and disease resistant. Mass it as a small-scale groundcover in the front of the sunny perennial border, use it by walkways and by other garden edges, and in the rock garden.

Culture

Like many speedwells, this selection prefers full sun to light shade, and a well-drained soil. It has been both drought tolerant, and seasonally moisture tolerant, under trial in northern Illinois. Maintenance is minimal, that being removal of the spent flower stems in autumn. The foliage has died back in severe winters with inadequate snow cover, but recovers in the spring. Avoid covering the stems with mulch, but mulch around plants on sandy soils to preserve some soil moisture. Avoid crowding by taller perennials that may shade it out.

Pest and Disease Problems

Resistant to powdery mildew and rust. Not bothered by insects, or browsed by rabbits or deer.

Propagation

Readily propagated by treatment of shoot tips with 1,250 ppm KIBA rooting solution for five seconds, or by division of stock plants. Cuttings have been readily rooted in July, October, and November. Potted stock plants can be divided almost any time of the year, and in-ground plants can be lifted and divided in spring or autumn. Small clumps with two to four stems each will establish readily without any rooting hormone treatment. Divisions will yield larger plants than will rooted cuttings.

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.

For more information about Chicagoland Grows®, contact the Plant Introduction Department, Chicago Botanic Garden, 1000 Lake Cook Road, Glencoe, IL 60022, (847) 835-8301, or visit chicagolandgrows.org.