



Chicagoland Grows®, Inc.



Plant Introduction Program – Plant Release Bulletin #52

Amsonia ciliata var. *tenuifolia*
'Verdant Venture' Bluestar PP33,415
Apocynaceae (Dogbane family)

The Chicagoland Grows® program is pleased to announce its first bluestar introduction, *Amsonia ciliata* var. *tenuifolia* 'Verdant Venture'. This selection sports narrow leaves and thin stems and an abundance of flowers with short, broad, powder-blue petals. Once flowering subsides near the end of spring, the deep green foliage persists all summer before turning bright yellow in the fall. The shorter, more compact habit of 'Verdant Venture' makes it more versatile and less dominant than other bluestars. No disease or pest issues have been detected during its 10-year trial at the Chicago Botanic Garden. As such, 'Verdant Venture' should be a high-performance, low-maintenance perennial for any sunny, well-drained site.

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Origin

'Verdant Venture' was developed from a trial of unnamed, unpatented *Amsonia ciliata* var. *tenuifolia* plants. Rounds of open pollination and selection took place during 2009 and 2010, with the most compact and uniform plants being selected. 'Verdant Venture' was selected as a potential cultivar in October 2013 by Jim Ault, Ph.D. Because seeds were pooled when collected, the specific parentage of 'Verdant Venture' is unknown.

Hardiness

USDA Zones 4-8

Bloom Season

In northern Illinois (USDA Zone 5), flowers begin blooming in early to mid-May. This continues through early June, lasting approximately three weeks.

Plant Habit

The stems of 'Verdant Venture' are short and more upright, giving it a low-growing mounded habit. The fine-textured foliage provides an airy, wispy presence compared to other densely mounding perennials.

Growth Rate and Size

In-ground plants reached a height of 17 inches and a width of 28 inches at four years, a height of 21 inches and a width of 37 inches at six years, and ultimately a height of 28 inches and a width of 55 inches at ten years.

Culture

This selection prefers sites with full sun to light shade and well-drained soil. While plants appreciate watering during hot dry spells, drier conditions are preferred to wet conditions. Very little maintenance is required, as pests and diseases are not an issue and this selection has a desirable habit without any pruning. Dead stems from the previous year can be cut back in early spring.

Pest/Disease Issues

No susceptibility or resistance to diseases or pests has been observed.

Propagation

Shoot tip cuttings root and develop well when taken from vegetative growth before flowering when it is about a foot tall. To optimize rooting consistency, cuttings can be treated with 1,000 ppm K-IBA for 5 seconds and placed in a medium of two parts perlite and one part peat. Cuttings are stuck in a 72-cell tray or other small pots at the Garden and placed in a fog house with a bench heat temperature of 75 degrees Fahrenheit. This selection can also be propagated from whole shoot cuttings later in the season if necessary.

Ornamental Characteristics/Landscape Value

'Verdant Venture' provides several seasons of interest, beginning in the spring and running through fall. Flowers with short, broad petals, held above the foliage, cover plants shortly after emergence from mid- to late spring. During the summer, threadlike, vibrant green foliage is on display and ages to a brilliant yellow in the fall. The more compact habit of this selection relative to other bluestars allows it to fit into a greater variety of sites and landscapes. While it will be suitable for wildflower gardens in some areas, it will also fit well into cottage gardens, rock gardens, and woodland gardens.

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.

