

6/20/2007 Some Good Kinds of Tobacco in the Floral Dome! - SHOW DOME

The summer flower display (June 9-September 9) in the Floral Dome includes plants that are closely related to the tobacco used for smoking use. They all belong to the genus *Nicotiana* from which the term nicotine was derived. They are members of the nightshade family that includes tomato, potato, petunia, bell pepper, and eggplant. *Nicotiana* species originated in South America and like to grow in warm weather. They bloom profusely without deadheading (picking off the old flowers) and are great additions to the home garden. They have intense, fragrant scents and attract hawk moth and hummingbird pollinators.

*Nicotiana sylvestris* is sometimes given the name South American tobacco or wild tobacco. It is thought that smoking tobacco, *N. tabacum*, was derived from this species. In the garden, wild tobacco can be 3 to 4 feet tall with numerous trumpet-shaped, white flowers that hang down. The flowers open and release their fragrance at night. This attracts hawk moths, but it also great for people relaxing on their patios on a summer evening.

*Nicotiana x sanderae* 'Avalon' is a *Nicotiana* hybrid that is short, compact, and covered with numerous colorful, tubular flowers. It is sometimes called "flowering tobacco," and it too provides a lovely fragrance in the garden. It is a wonderful plant both in garden borders and in container plantings.

There are a couple of possible problems that face these plants. *Tobacco mosaic virus* causes the plants to have a mottled look in the leaves and may stunt their growth. This plant virus is spread primarily by touching, so wash your hands thoroughly before entering the vegetable garden after working with *Nicotiana* plants. The virus cannot harm people and other animals. Aphids are a common insect pest on tobacco. These sucking insects may be found in large numbers on the lower side of leaves. Reduce their numbers with water spray from a garden hose. *Nicotiana* plants are annuals in Wisconsin, so neither the virus nor the aphids will be a lasting problem.

Come see the beautiful variety of *Nicotiana* plants in the summer floral dome. Their beauty, scent, and easy care far outweigh any possible problems.



All-America Selections Winner *Nicotiana* 'Avalon Bright Pink'  
Photo credit: All-America Selections.