

# VALE'S GREENHOUSE



*Quality Plants For The Chinook Zone*

301 – 3<sup>rd</sup> St. N.W., Black Diamond, Alberta

933-4814

## PERENNIAL PLANT OF THE YEAR 2000

### **Scabiosa columbaria “Butterfly Blue” Pincushion Flower**



Each year the Perennial Plant Association sends each member a ballot to select a Perennial Plant of the Year. These plants do not tend to be new introductions to the garden world, but plants that have been tried and thus proven worthy for nomination. After the selection, the plant is then promoted all across Canada and continental U.S.A. Here, in the Black Diamond and Calgary area, there have been years that the plant chosen has not been hardy to our Agricultural Zone of 2 or 3.

The journey of this plants travels into the Perennial Plant of the year started over 40 years ago in Ireland. Mr David Tristram of the Nursery Farplants grew this unique Scabiosa in his Irish garden 15 year before moving to England. He then grew this beloved plant in his Sussex garden until the early 1980's. Marketing cooperatively, between Farplants and the English nursery, Blakedown, they selected Scabiosa Columbaria “Butterfly Blue” from the garden, for their first venture in promoting plants. Indeed, Butterfly Blue has become an international winner.

The nearly flat grey-green leaves hug the ground around the slender stem of the delicate lilac blue pincushion like flowers. The blooms appear on 12 to 15 inch stems June to frost when deadheading is consistent. The Pincushion Flower derives its common name from the stamens, which stand above the petals resembling pins stuck in a pincushion. The hairy leaves form a rosette around the base of the plant creating a mound of 6 to 8 inches high and 12 to 15 inches across. Despite its delicate appearance, this Scabiosa is a sturdy plant and will not require staking.

This plant thrives in well-drained soil that has been amended with organic matter (compost). This excellent, long-blooming cultivar, is an old-fashioned garden favourite, and grows best in full sun to light shade. This plant does not seem to be fazed by the summer heat, and the flowers do not fade as they age making it a wonderful choice for flowers arrangers. It is recommended that the basal foliage not be cut back in the fall. Simply cut off the slender stem that held the flowers and remove any winter damaged leaves in the spring.

For more information on the Perennial Plant Association, and past Selections for the Perennial Plant of the Year, check their web site at [www.perennialplant.org](http://www.perennialplant.org).