

***Sutera cordata*** C.E.O. Kuntze  
(*Chaenostoma cordatum*, *Bacopa cordata*, *Sutera diffusa*)

**Bacopa**

**Other Common Names:** Sutera.

**Family:** Scrophulariaceae.

**Cold Hardiness:** Cold tolerant and used as a winter annual or perennial in USDA zones 9(8b) through 11; often used as a transition or summer annual in cooler climates.

**Foliage:** Evergreen; opposite; simple; rhombic-ovate to nearly cordate; small,  $\frac{3}{8}$  to  $\frac{5}{8}$  ( $\frac{3}{4}$ ) long, and thickish; tips acute; margins distally dentate-serrate; palmately veined, faintly impressed above and lightly raised beneath; base cuneate, rounded, or nearly cordate; the blade is medium to dark green; petioles are  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  long, green, and sometimes winged with tiny glandular pubescence.

**Flower:** Perfect; terminal; five-petals fused at the base into a narrow throat and recurved distally to form a flattened small five-lobed white flower; the corolla is surrounded by a five-lobed green calyx; additional colors in the blue, pink, and lavender range are being developed via hybridization with other species.

**Fruit:** Tiny capsules; not ornamental; deadheading is not required.

**Stem / Bark:** Stems — stiff; mostly prostrate; green with tiny glandular pubescence; Buds — tiny,  $\frac{1}{32}$  or less in length; foliose; green; Bark — not applicable in our region.

**Habit:** Bacopa forms a flat spreading semi-evergreen rounded herbaceous mat of trailing stems and under cultivation in our region plants are only 20 to 40(80) tall with a 2N to 4N spread; in its native land it may develop into a woody subshrub mounding to 240 tall with an indefinite spread; the overall texture is fine.

**Cultural Requirements:** Morning sun and afternoon shade is best, but plants can tolerate full sun to partial shade if a steady moisture supply is available; plants frequently tend to slump or succumb to the heat of our summers, but if they survive, they may return to flower in autumn; plants require a moist well drained fertile soil and are not particularly drought tolerant; recovery from severe drought stress is poor.

**Pathological Problems:** White flies are an occasional problem; roots / stems rot in wet soils.

**Ornamental Assets:** The dark green fine textured leaves interspersed with tiny stainless virgin white flowers create a beautiful fine textured mat.

**Limitations & Liabilities:** Plants fade in the mid-summer heat and are prone to rots in poorly drained soils.

**Landscape Utilization:** Bacopa is excellent when trailing over the edge of containers, window boxes, hanging baskets, or low walls; it also forms a reasonably dense seasonal groundcover for small areas or can be incorporated into rock gardens; it does not climb and will work well with more upright species in mixed plantings.

**Other Comments:** Although touted elsewhere as a summer annual, Bacopa's best use in our region is as a transition annual in the northern portion of the region or as a cool season annual in the southern portions.

**Native Habitat:** South Africa.

**Related Taxa:** Much confusion as to the taxonomy of this group has arisen from the erroneous classification of the first cultivar to be widely grown, *Sutera cordata* 'Snowflake', under the incorrect species names *Bacopa cordata* or *Bacopa monnieri* (the Water Hyssop); this confusion is still present in much of the literature and appears to be even further muddled by the fact that many of the newer cultivars with a wider range of flower colors are of hybrid origin among two or more species;

'Snowflake' has small white flowers, while 'Snowstorm' is similar, but with larger flowers; the genus *Sutera* A.W. Roth contains about 130 species, so the potential for new introductions and hybrid forms is high.

**References:** Burnie et al., 1999; Cooke, 1998; Hogdson, 2002; Hogue, 1999.

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