

**ONLA's August 2002
"Plant of the Month"**

**Clethra, Summersweet
Clethra alnifolia 'Hummingbird'**



Clethra alnifolia 'Hummingbird'

Clethra is a small native (Maine to Florida) shrub that is becoming more and more popular with landscapers due to the frilly white flower display and wonderful floral aromas that reign for a month or more in mid-Summer. Clethra also sports attractive dark green leaves, tawny brown to golden yellow fall foliage and winter appeal with its tiny remnant 1/8 inch diameter brown fruits arrayed in upright panicles.

'Hummingbird' is a compact cultivar which is 30-40 inches in height, compared to the 4-8 feet tall (about as wide) size for the species. As with

many clethras, 'Hummingbird' often forms large colonies due to its spread by rhizomes (underground stems). The overall aromas and massing of blooms at the mid-summer peak will almost make you swoon like a southern belle, appropriate for the origin of this cultivar at Georgia's Callaway Gardens.

Clethra alnifolia has cold hardiness well north of Ohio to Zone 4 and will tolerate reasonably wet sites. Like many woody ornamentals, organic, acid, moist but well-drained soils are ideal. Tolerant of partial shade and full sun. Various cultivars available in both pink and white flowers. Not found to have too many pest problems, though mites can be a concern.

In summary, a must for the warm, aromatic headiness of a summer garden.

Ohio Nursery and Landscape Association Plant Selection Committee choice in 1993.



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