The Mustard Seed

Landscaping & Garden Centers

Creeping Wintergreen

Gaultheria procumbens

Creeping Wintergreen fruit
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Height: 8 inches

Spread: 3 feet

Sunlight: ○ ◐ ●

Hardiness Zone: 2a

Other Names: Checkerberry, Wintergreen

Description:

A good groundcover for highly acidic, sandy and poor soils; small urn-shaped flowers in spring, bright red berries in fall, and purple fall color; extremely fragrant leaves smell like wintergreen when crushed; for very specific locations only, loves shade

Ornamental Features

Creeping Wintergreen features dainty nodding shell pink bell-shaped flowers at the ends of the branches from mid spring to mid summer. It has dark green evergreen foliage. The fragrant oval leaves turn burgundy in the fall, which persists throughout the winter. It produces red berries from early to late fall.

Landscape Attributes

Creeping Wintergreen is a spreading evergreen shrub with a ground-hugging habit of growth. Its relatively fine texture sets it apart from other landscape plants with less refined foliage.

This is a relatively low maintenance shrub, and should not require much pruning, except when necessary, such as to remove dieback. Deer don't particularly care for this plant and will usually leave it alone in favor of tastier treats. Gardeners should be aware of the following characteristic(s) that may warrant special consideration;

- Suckering

Creeping Wintergreen foliage
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Creeping Wintergreen is recommended for the following landscape applications;

- Groundcover

Planting & Growing

Creeping Wintergreen will grow to be about 8 inches tall at maturity, with a spread of 3 feet. It tends to fill out right to the ground and therefore doesn't necessarily require facer plants in front. It grows at a medium rate, and under ideal conditions can be expected to live for approximately 10 years.

This shrub performs well in both full sun and full shade. It requires an evenly moist well-drained soil for optimal growth, but will die in standing water. It is very fussy about its soil conditions and must have rich, acidic soils to ensure success, and is subject to chlorosis (yellowing) of the foliage in alkaline soils. It is somewhat tolerant of urban pollution, and will benefit from being planted in a relatively sheltered location. Consider covering it with a thick layer of mulch in winter to protect it in exposed locations or colder microclimates. This species is native to parts of North America.