



Photo credit: Janine Willis

Common Name: Spider Flower

Plant Type: Self-Seeding Annual

Light Requirements: Full Sun- Partial Shade

Height: 3-5 ft

Bloom Time: Summer into Fall

Hardiness Zone: 9-10

Cleome hassleriana

Cleome hassleriana is a species of plant belonging to the caper family (Capparaceae). Its common name, Spider Flower, comes from the appearance of the thread-like stamens of the flower and the long seedpods that form. Cleome is a long-blooming plant that develops flowers which progress upward along the flower stalk, even as seedpods begin to develop below the bloom. The result is a unique appearance of seedpods that resembles "levels" or "stacks." The flowers of Cleome bloom in shades of white, pink, rose, or purple, and attract bees, hummingbirds, and butterflies.

Cleome is a self-seeding annual in our zone 6 location. As seedpods mature, they open and drop their seeds in the garden, providing a large crop of seedlings for the following year. Our Cleome (*Rose Queen*, pictured above) has reliably grown new plants in the same location for many years. Cleome grows happily in full sun in well-drained soil. It can tolerate some drought, though regular moisture will promote better growth and flowering.

Take care when handling Cleome, as the stems have hairy prickles along their lengths. The foliage is slightly sticky, and plants exude a skunk-like scent. Cleome is not normally favored by deer, rabbits, or groundhogs. Although the leaves do resemble the leaves of *Cannabis sativa*, Cleome is not at all related to marijuana.

References:

<https://hort.extension.wisc.edu/articles/spider-flower-cleome-hassleriana/>

<https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/cleome/>

Annual Flowers for New York State, by E.F. Schaufler and R.G. Moyer