



Gaura

Gaura lindheimeri 'Whirling Butterflies'

Evening Primrose Family (Onagraceae)

Zones: 5-8

Full Sun

Low Water

Location: Courtyard and Orangerie

With a name like 'Whirling Butterflies', how can you resist this plant? *Gaura* (*Gaura lindheimeri*) is a drought and heat tolerant perennial, native to the Southwest, that is quickly gaining recognition as a superb garden plant. The plant is fairly large, forming an open, airy, shrub-like shape 3 to 4 feet high with equal spread. The plant blooms from early summer until fall, its long slender stems bearing spikes of white flowers that gradually turn pink. In a breeze, the loose sprays of flowers on dancing stems look like a cloud of small butterflies. Flowers do not appear in profusion at any one time, yet blooms are continuously seen throughout the summer. *Gaura* looks great with other informal plants in a perennial border, or it can be used in a natural setting with wildflowers.

Planting and growing *Gaura* is simple. It can be easily grown from seed, and is, in fact, self-seeding if left to its own devices. However, it is also available in nurseries as a potted plant. Several selections are available including 'Corrie's Gold', with variegated leaves and creamy-yellow flowers; 'Siskiyou Pink', with deep pink blossoms; and 'Whirling Butterflies', with white flowers that are slightly larger than the species. At the end of the blooming season, *Gaura* can be pruned to within a few inches of the ground. *Gaura* is long-lived and grows best in full sun to partial shade and dry, well-drained soils. It is hardy to Zone 5, however, mulching around the base of the plant in cold winter areas will help protect the root systems.