

Winecups, *Callirhoe involucrata*



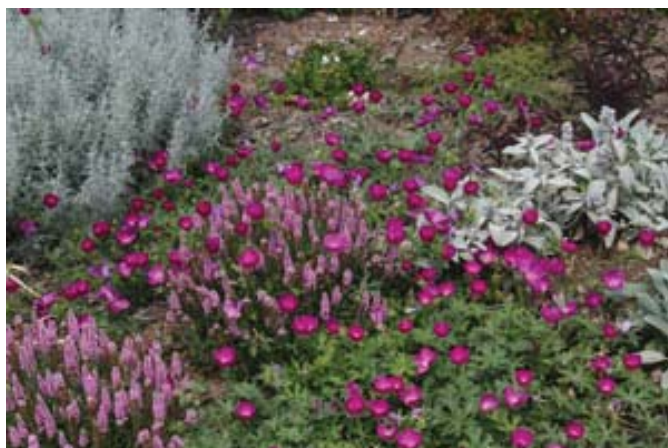
Callirhoe involucrata growing at the Denver Botanical Garden.

The magenta-colored, chalice-shaped flowers are 1½ -2½ inches wide, with a white spot at the base of the five petals. The solitary, upward-facing blossoms open in the morning, close in the evening and remain closed after pollination. Fruits consist of 15-25 kidney-shaped segments stacked together, with



The flowers of winecups are a brilliant magenta color.

each segment containing a single seed. The rounded, hairy leaves are deeply palmately lobed, and unlike most heat and drought-tolerant plants, are deep green rather than grey or silver. In spring the foliage emerges from the long, woody tap root that can be up to 5 inches in diameter, with the ground-hugging stems eventually growing about 3 feet long.



The magenta flowers of wine cups contrasts well with blue foliage of *Artemisia* and lambs ear (*Stachys*).

The variety *tenuissima*, Mexican wine cups, is native to higher elevations in the mountains of Mexico. It has the same sprawling habit and cleft leaves, but the flowers are a lighter lavender-purple.



Winecups planted with pink *Veronica* and fuzzy-leaves lambs ear (*Stachys*).

C. involucrata was a 1999 Plant Select® winner and also received the Plant of Merit designation from the Royal Horticultural Society.



Winecups have a chalice-shaped flower.

In the garden, wine cups are ideal for the informal border, and look great spilling over a rock wall or tumbling down a bank. Because of their growth habit, many plants need to be planted together to



The leaves of winecups are deeply palmately lobed.

create a mat of foliage for a groundcover. The long, trailing stems look best growing among nearby plants and won't smother other plants. The intense wine-red blooms are a striking contrast when rambling through Missouri primrose with its lemon yellow flowers. I have some planted amongst low, pink-red Veronica 'Heidekind' so the colors echo each other, but the flower form provides contrast. They also combine well with lamb's ears (*Stachys byzantinus*), yarrow (*Achillea*), columbine, daylilies, strawberries, and even prickly pear cactus. They look very natural interplanted with short grasses, reminiscent of their prairie heritage, and are an excellent addition to native plant gardens, wild gardens, and naturalized areas or meadows.

Winecups are easy to grow in full sun in well-drained sandy or loamy soils, but tolerate clay and infertile soils. They are drought tolerant when established, and will thrive in hot south or west facing beds. The plants die back completely in winter and re-emerge from the crown in spring.

C. involucrata can be grown from seed, but more commonly is available as perennial plants. If attempting to grow from seed, germination will be improved by scarification. This can be accomplished by rubbing the seeds between coarse sandpaper to remove the outer husk before planting. Sow outdoors in late summer or early fall about 1/8 inch deep. The plants self-sow under the right conditions; however, transplanting can be difficult because of the tap root.



New stems grow from the thick tap root each spring.

Winecups has few pest problems, although crown rot may occur in poorly drained soils. Rabbits are quite fond of the leaves, but the plants are supposedly deer resistant.

– Susan Mahr, University of Wisconsin - Madison

Additional Information:

- *Callirhoe involucrata* – on the Missouri Botanic Garden's Kemper Center for Home Gardening website at www.mobot.org/gardeninghelp/plantfinder/Plant.asp?code=G450
- *Callirhoe involucrata* – in the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center native plant database at www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id_plant=CAIN2