

# Older Plants That Deserve

## Jim Broccolo — Clesen Wholesale

For an overlooked annual that makes a towering statement, Jim Broccolo of Clesen Wholesale, recommends flowering tobacco, *Nicotiana sylvestris*.

Growing up to five feet tall with a spread of up to two feet, the plant has abundant, pure white, fragrant, trumpet-shaped flowers that hang from the main growing stem. "People might ordinarily be intimidated by this large annual, but it makes such a great architectural statement in the landscape," Broccolo says.

"I have seen it successfully planted in large mixed perennial beds as a dramatic summer-blooming backdrop in commercial settings and parks," Broccolo explains, adding, "Some adventurous gardeners are even planting them in oversized urns and planters for a dramatic statement."

A relative of smoking tobacco (*Nicotiana tabacum*), flowering tobacco was introduced into gardens in the United

States and England in the 1800s. Victorian-era gardeners planted it along walkways and paths so its sweet fragrance could perfume the walks, especially in the evening when the flowers fully open and the plant is most fragrant. That's something those of us in the 21<sup>st</sup> century can still appreciate,

and Broccolo recommends planting *Nicotiana sylvestris* near a patio or window.

Although one of its common names is woodland tobacco, *Nicotiana sylvestris* tolerates full sun. Broccolo notes that it often does best getting a little afternoon shade during the hottest part of summer. The flowers conserve their energy during the peak of the day and release their fragrance in the evening.

"These plants are not much to speak of in a four-inch pot at the beginning of the summer," Broccolo admits, "but have

faith, because once the summer heat kicks in, these really put on a great show!"



*Photo courtesy of the National Garden Bureau*