

PLANT CORNER

Welcome to another year of the Plant Corner, a series of profiles of STAR PERFORMERS among perennial garden plants from the folks at Chaska Farm & Garden.



Malva 'Parkrondell' Musk Mallow

It is often helpful to learn about families of plants. If you know one plant in a family, what it looks like, how it grows and the conditions it likes, you may already know something about other plants in that family. I'll bet you already know a few members of the Malvaceae family. Hollyhocks and Hibiscus are both members of this family which is known for big, bright flowers and the love of full sun. Inside the Malvaceae family the genus *Malva*, also called Musk Mallow, is probably not as well-known but includes several great garden plants. *Malva* "Parkrondell" would probably remind you of the Hollyhocks your Grandmother grew. "Parkrondell" is tall, up to 5 ft., and upright with carnation-like lavender flowers packed against the cane-like stems in axillary clusters. The texture, color and form of "Parkrondell" are all very pleasing. It is tall and has a good, clean presence in the back of the border. "Parkrondell" is covered with glorious, double-centered flowers for an extended period from mid to late summer when many of the mainstay perennials have passed peak. This is a plant that could carry a border almost single handedly for a long period from a distance as well as close up and in difficult soils. Full sun is, however, not negotiable and additional moisture in dry periods will help extend bloom. Musk Mallows perhaps best work their old-fashioned charm in a cottage garden setting where taller plants and cut flowers are the goal. Peonies, Delphiniums, Lilies and Shasta Daisies come to mind as suitable compatriots along with some of the taller cutting annuals like Zinnias and Irish Bells. Now that you've met the family (Malvaceae) you may want to try other Musk Mallows. The tall, pink Hollyhock Mallow *Malva alcea* is an older garden plant with similar traits. *Malva sylvestris* 'Zebrina' has a stunning bicolor flower with stark purple veining. And, not to be ignored, the perennial Hibiscus (*H. moscheutos*) with their clownishly large flowers come August and September. What a great family!

—Tom