

## Angel Trumpets: Brugmansia and Datura in South Florida

### Brugmansia

Brugmansia are perennial trees or shrubs in South Florida with large pendulous, not erect, flowers. Ranging in height from 6 feet to 20 feet, most have tan, slightly rough bark and produce spiny fruit. The Brugmansia leaves are generally large and alternate, some with toothy margins and covered with fine hairs. Their common name refers to the large, very dramatic trumpet-shaped pendulous flowers. These may be single or double, growing 8-20" in length and up to 12" across. Brugmansia color ranges from white through yellow to pink and even orange or red. One Brugmansia variety, 'tricolor', has blossoms which open white, age yellow and end up pink. Most Brugmansia also boast an attractive scent with citrus overtones, most noticeable in early evening.



Orange Brugmansia



Tri-color Brugmansia, flowers change hues from white to soft yellow to apricot pink

### **Datura.**

Daturas in South Florida are herbaceous, leafy short-lived perennials or annuals with upright facing flowers. Daturas in South Florida can grow up to 6' in height. Leaves are alternate, velvety textured, with a lobed or toothy margin. Datura flowers are erect or spreading, trumpet-shaped, and 2-8" long by 2-4" wide. Most Datura flowers are moderately to highly fragrant especially at night. Flower color varies from white to yellow, pink, and rich purple. Datura flowers may be single to fully double in form. The fruit is a spiny capsule giving rise to its other common names of thorn apple and devil's apple. When ripe they split open releasing many seeds.



White Datura



Double Yellow Datura



Double Purple Datura

Almost all varieties of Brugmansia and Datura are spectacular specimen plants ideally suited for the garden spotlight. Angel trumpets are awe inspiring as the centerpiece in containers. They can also be used to create dramatic backdrops in mixed borders that say, "WOW!" As they are most fragrant at night, and most have white or very light colored blooms, they are also ideally suited for moon gardens. Planted in tall pots or overhanging banks they form an intoxicating bower for evening garden parties or romantic dinners.

Note that ALL parts of ALL members of both genera are highly toxic and may be fatal if ingested by humans, pets, or livestock. Wear gloves when trimming the plant and avoid getting plant juices on the skin.

**Family:** Solanaceae

**Genus:** Brugmansia, Datura

**Common Name:** Both Brugmansia and Datura are commonly called angel trumpets.

**Origin:** Native to subtropical regions of South America, along the Andes from Colombia to northern Chile, and also in southern Brazil.

**Culture:** Brugmansia are easily grown in moist, fertile, well-drained soil, in full sun to part shade, in South Florida. Flowering begins in early to mid-spring and continues until early winter. Datura are easily grown in part to full sun, in moist, well-drained soil. Outdoors in good locations the plants tend to reseed readily and may become invasive. Both genera need good drainage and plenty of water. Both genera will bloom well in the shade, which is unusual for flowering plants.

**Climate Zone:** Brugmansia are another one of those plants listed as only growing in zones 10b and 11 in Florida by IFAS. In actuality there are many old specimens of Brugmansia in LaBelle's zone 9b. Brugmansia probably would benefit from protection in the hard freezes seen in Muse. Datura are on the edge in LaBelle, they survive some winters and die other winters. Datura are short lived plants in any case and are probably best treated as short lived perennials in LaBelle.

**Water:** For best flowering both genera need water during the dry season. Both genera will survive without extra water but they won't flower as much.

**Propagation:** Most species of Brugmansia are easily propagated from cuttings taken from the end of a branch in summer. Brugmansia can also be grown from seed. Datura are usually grown from seed. Seed of both can be obtained over the internet. Brugmansia and Datura are rarely offered by nurseries. Their toxicity presents a liability problem for the nurseries.

**Maintenance:** Both genera are hungry plants that will require frequent fertilizer application to promote continuous bloom. In South Florida they should be fed with a balanced 20-20-20 or 10-10-10 fertilizer according to the package directions spring, summer and fall. Plants may be pruned for shaping or to control size. Frequent deadheading (removal of dead flowers) will promote continued bloom. If the soil is alkaline add iron and manganese at a four to one ration of Fe to Mn. Add Epsom salts on occasion.

**Pest and Disease:** Both genera are commonly bothered by whiteflies, spider mites, and aphids. Occasionally cabbage worms, cucumber beetles, slugs, snails, mealy bugs, and fungus gnats may become a problem. Treat with appropriate insecticides, slug bait, or repellent products. Overwatering can lead to root rot and other fungal infections. Possible diseases include tobacco mosaic virus, tomato spotted wilt, fusarium wilt, verticillium wilt, Phytophthora, Phoma, and Botrytis.

**Garden Uses:** Almost all varieties are spectacular specimen plants ideally suited for the garden spotlight. Angel trumpets are awe inspiring as the centerpiece in containers. They can also be used to create dramatic backdrops in mixed borders that say, "WOW!" As they are most fragrant at night, and as most have white or very light colored blooms, they are also ideally suited for moon gardens. Planted in tall pots or overhanging banks they form an intoxicating bower for evening garden parties or romantic dinners.

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