"Favorite Flowers of the Chesapeake Master Gardeners"

Liatris spicata by Helene Haluska

Photo credit: ncsu.edu

Common name: Blazing star or gayfeather
Family name: Asteraceae

I like this plant because of its color, long lasting bloom, and striking appearance. Its lavender color works well with the other plants in the beds where it is located since these beds have flowers that are primarily blue, purple, and pink. Liatris makes a good cut or dried flower and is native to eastern North America. I first grew this plant from corms that I got at a big box store at a very reasonable price. Since there were 50 in the package, I planted them in several different locations in my flower beds to see what would happen. The majority came up and have continued to do so each year since then. This plant attracts bees and butterflies and occasionally hummingbirds, making a good choice for pollinator gardens.

Liatris prefers average, well-drained soil and can tolerate drought, heat, and humidity after established. It does not like waterlogged, winter soils. It is a sun lover although it can take partial shade. It is hardy from zones 3 through 8. The plants grow between two and four feet tall and have a vertical form. In mid-summer the flower spikes, which are from 6-12 inches long, bloom from the top down, which is the reverse of most flowers. The plants have a spread of 1 to 1.5 feet. The leaves of the plant are dark green, grass-like, and grow up to the base of the flower stalk. This is a relatively low maintenance plant since it does not have any serious pests or diseases and only needs to be deadheaded once after the flowers fade. It provides a nice vertical form in a perennial bed and will pair well with any mounding plants.

References:
plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/liatris
https://mgnv.org/plants/perennials/blazingstar/

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