

Tanacetum densum Partridge feather

The genus *Tanacetum* is a very diverse family of plants, which includes about 70 different species of annuals, perennials, and subshrubs. They range from the common garden Tansy (*Tanacetum vulgare*) and Feverfew (*Tanacetum parthenium*) to the beautiful Painted Daisies (*Tanacetum coccineum* or *Pyrethrum*) to some lesser-known drought tolerant species such as Partridge Feather (*Tanacetum densum* subsp. *amani*) and Snowdaisy (*Tanacetum niveum*), which are the ones we'll discuss in this article. This year in Denver we actually had close to our true average rainfall, but we need to remember that Denver has a semi-arid climate, and we should continue to practice our Xeriscaping and Waterwise gardening.

Some typical characteristics of *Tanacetums* are finely-cut foliage (sometimes silver), daisy- or button-like flower heads, well-drained soil, and average moisture. Partridge Feather (*Tanacetum densum* subsp. *amani*) has fern-like silver foliage, small yellow button-like flowers in mid-summer, but when established, it can take extremely dry conditions in less than perfect soil. Partridge Feather is definitely grown more for its' foliage than for its' flowers. It stands only 6-8 inches high, spreads 2 ft. wide, and can make a beautiful silver groundcover in some of your more inhospitable garden locations. I have mine planted in an extremely hot, unprotected southwest end of my Xeriscape garden in native soil, and it only needed watering 2 times per month in its' second year of establishment. Partridge Feather should not be planted with water-loving perennials as too much water will definitely rot this plant. Use as a border in the front of the Xeriscape garden, or under and around taller drought tolerant perennials such as 'May Night' Meadow Sage (*Salvia nemorosa* 'May Night'), tall varieties of Stonecrop such as *Sedum* 'Autumn Joy', and taller Yarrow varieties such as *Achillea* 'Moonshine'.

Snowdaisy or Snowtansy (*Tanacetum niveum*) closely resembles the common garden Tansy, but it has gray fern-like foliage, stands only 12-18 inches tall, is covered with small white daisy-like flowers in mid-summer, but can take a lot less water. I recommend this plant to customers who like the old-fashioned Tansy, but who are also trying to conserve on water. It is definitely aromatic and can do some self-sowing, but I wouldn't say it's invasive. It's a very cute plant for the mid Xeriscape garden, but is not as fussy about water as Partridge Feather, and can take a little more water and still be happy. Both of these drought tolerant perennials can be found at a better independent garden center. Enjoy!