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### *Phacelia tanacetifolia*

**TANSY PHACELIA** is an annual or perennial. Native to south-western North America it has small fragrant, pale blue, lilac or mauve flowers with prominently protruding stamens. It is also known as *Aitohunajakukka* (Finnish), Bee food, Bee phacelia, *Bienenfreund* (German), *Borstiger Bienenfreund* (German), *Büschelblume* (German), *Büschelschön* (German), *Facélia vratičolistá* (Slovak), Fiddleneck, *Honungsfacelia* (Swedish), *Honungsört* (Swedish), Lacy phacelia, Lacy scorpionweed, Phacelia (English, German), *Phazellie* (German), Purple heliotrope, Purple tansy, *Rainfarnblättriges Büschelschön* (German), *Svazanka vratičolistá* (Czech), Tansy-leafed phacelia, and Wild heliotrope. The flowers are pollinated by bees, and butterflies.

*Tanacetifolia* is made up of *Tanacetum* (genus name) and Latin *-folia* (leaved) components meaning ‘with tansy-like leaves’.

This plant is particularly cultivated in some countries as a honey plant.

Tansy phacelia was introduced to Europe in the early 1900s as ground cover.

Some authorities suggest that the speed with which it grows to provide that ground cover, together with its value in replacing some nutrients in the soil, explains its attractiveness especially in France as a green manure.

A fascinating trial was run in the early 1990s in some English wheatfields (*Triticum*) that were suffering the unwanted attentions of aphids. It seems that hover-flies, recognised as an important biological control, are happy to lay their eggs on tansy phacelia as its nectar can provide them with energy and its pollen can aid the maturation of the eggs. The hover-fly is also very fond of aphids and the trial involved growing lines of the plant alongside wheat in three fields and comparing the results with three nearby wheatfields where tansy phacelia was not cultivated. These indicated that when both wheat and tansy phacelia matured at expected rates the numbers of aphids in the wheatfields surrounded by the North American plant were significantly less. Similar trials involving other crops such as cabbages (*Brassica oleracea* var. *capitata*) have been carried out elsewhere and it would seem with similar effects.