Santolina

*A WaterWise Shrub*

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If you have been following plant profiles for WaterWise plants, here is another species to add to your list. The genus *Santolina* includes several species of horticultural interest; these members of the sunflower/aster family are native to the Mediterranean and do very well in the western valleys of Oregon such as the Willamette Valley. Several species, listed below, are frequently available at local garden centers, usually in 4-inch pots and sometimes situated with the herbs. They are evergreen shrubs with tiny leaves resembling conifers—one species is silver gray, the other green. Both are low growing and spreading or slightly mounding, acting much like a ground cover. In summer, tiny pom-pom bright yellow flowers cover the plants. I have been growing santolinas for almost 30 years, and will continue to recommend them, even though they are sometimes short-lived. Plant them in full sun with moderate to minimal irrigation once they are established.

The most commonly available one is the gray lavender cotton, *S. chamaecyparissus*. As the name suggests, the foliage is silver or gray, making an interesting contrast in the garden. The other one is *S. rosmarinifolius* (synonym *S. virens*) with dark green foliage. Give them plenty of room to spread. Sometimes they die out in the middle as they grow, but they are easy to replace with new plants; they are also easy to propagate from cuttings.

For more information about these species and more photographs, visit the OSU Landscape Plant Identification site at: [http://oregonstate.edu/dept/ldplants/](http://oregonstate.edu/dept/ldplants/)

*S. chamaecyparissus* photo by Linda McMahan