



Cooperative Extension Service
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

*Pentas lanceolata*¹

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Introduction

This upright evergreen shrub or tall perennial becomes 3 to 4 feet tall and is decorated throughout most of the year in hardiness zones 9 through 11 with many 3-inch-wide, dense clusters of long-tubed, star-shaped flowers (Fig. 1). Available in white, pink, red, and lavender, these blossoms are extremely popular with butterflies and are long-lasting as cut flowers. Hummingbirds enjoy the red-flowered selections. They often visit this flower sooner than any other in the garden. Plants fertilized regularly during the growing season will continue to grow and bloom all during the warm months. It grows year-round in central and south Florida. Leaves and stems are covered with fine hairs, and leaves have prominent veins on the undersides.

General Information

Scientific name: *Pentas lanceolata*

Pronunciation: PEN-tuss lan-see-oh-LAY-tuh

Common name(s): Pentas

Family: *Rubinaceae*

Plant type: perennial; herbaceous

USDA hardiness zones: 8B through 11 (Fig. 2)

Planting month for zone 8: May; Jun; Jul

Planting month for zone 9: Apr; May; Jun; Jul; Aug

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: Feb; Mar; Apr; May;

Jun; Jul; Aug; Sep; Oct; Nov; Dec

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: container or above-ground planter; hanging basket; cut flowers; accent; attracts hummingbirds; attracts butterflies; hedge; small parking lot islands (< 100 square feet in size);

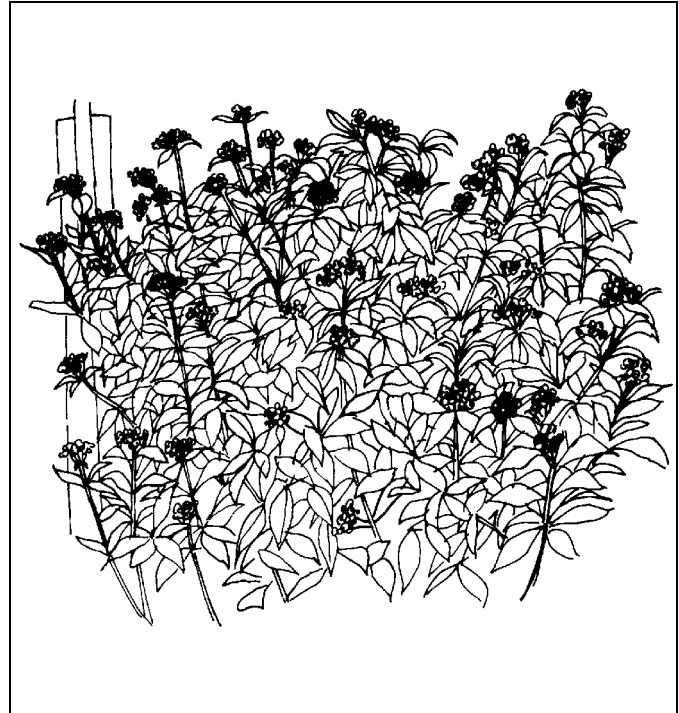


Figure 1. Pentas.

medium-sized parking lot islands (100-200 square feet in size);
large parking lot islands (> 200 square feet in size)

Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

Description

Height: 2 to 3 feet

Spread: 2 to 3 feet

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Plant habit: round
Plant density: dense
Growth rate: fast
Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: entire
Leaf shape: ovate; obovate
Leaf venation: pinnate
Leaf type and persistence: semi-evergreen
Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: not applicable
Fall characteristic: not applicable

Flower

Flower color: pink; lavender; white; purple
Flower characteristic: spring flowering; summer flowering; fall flowering; flower season is longer in zones 9-11

Fruit

Fruit shape: no fruit
Fruit length: no fruit
Fruit cover: no fruit
Fruit color: not applicable
Fruit characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: usually with one stem/trunk
Current year stem/twig color: green
Current year stem/twig thickness: medium

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun
Soil tolerances: clay; sand; acidic; loam
Drought tolerance: moderate
Soil salt tolerances: unknown
Plant spacing: 18 to 24 inches

Other

Roots: not applicable

Winter interest: no special winter interest

Outstanding plant: not particularly outstanding

Invasive potential: not known to be invasive

Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests

Use and Management

Plants can be clipped as a hedge but flower production will suffer. They are best left unclipped so flowers are free to develop on new growth. Flowers last 3 to 5 days after they are cut and brought indoors. Plant on 18- to 24-inch centers for mass plantings.

Tolerant of a wide-range of soil types, Pentas prefers fertile, well-drained soils, regular moisture, and will grow quickly in full sun or light shade. Plants will flower fairly well with as little as 2 to 3 hours of sun each day. Plants can be dug, cut back, and stored in a container of soil over the winter in climates that receive freezing temperatures. Water occasionally to keep roots from drying out and replant and fertilize in the spring. Heavy mulch applied over the crown of plants cut back to the ground will help plants overwinter in hardiness zone 8. In most years, plants regrow from the partially buried stems in the spring.

Dwarf cultivars are available that grow to about 14-inches-tall.

Propagation is by softwood cuttings, which root easily in soil or water, or by seed.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern, but occasionally mites. Caterpillars sometimes chew on the foliage.



Figure 3. Foliage of Pentas