Pilea cadierei[1]

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Introduction

The variegated foliage on Aluminum Plant is unlike any other, with shiny silver, irregularly-shaped markings parallel to the lateral veins (Fig. 1). Leaves are held opposite each other on square, green stems producing a thick ground cover about 12-inches-tall in a shaded landscape. Small white flowers are produced at the ends of the stems in the summer but they are mostly overshadowed by the conspicuous foliage.

General Information

Scientific name: *Pilea cadierei*
Pronunciation: PYE-lee-uh kuh-DEER-ree-eye
Common name(s): Aluminum Plant
Family: *Urticaceae*
Plant type: ground cover
USDA hardiness zones: 10 through 11 (Fig. 2)
Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round
Origin: not native to North America
Uses: hanging basket; suitable for growing indoors; ground cover; cascading down a wall
Availablity: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

Description

Height: .5 to 1 feet
Spread: depends upon supporting structure
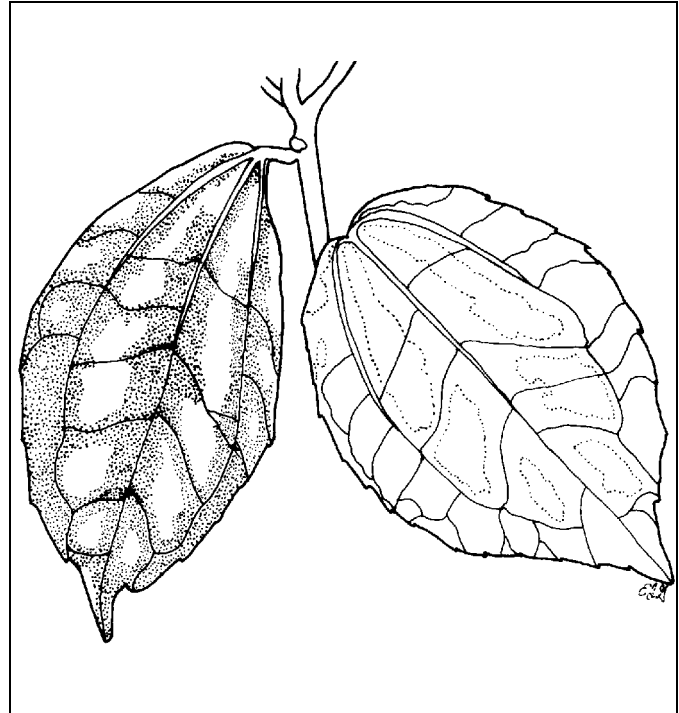**Plant habit:** spreading
Plant density: moderate
Growth rate: moderate

Figure 1. Aluminum Plant.

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: serrate
Leaf shape: obovate

Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Leaf venation: pinnate
Leaf type and persistence: evergreen
Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches
Leaf color: silver/gray; variegated
Fall color: no fall color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: white
Flower characteristic: summer flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: unknown
Fruit length: unknown
Fruit cover: unknown
Fruit color: unknown
Fruit characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: not applicable
Current year stem/twig color: green
Current year stem/twig thickness: medium

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in the shade
Soil tolerances: occasionally wet; acidic; slightly alkaline; sand; loam; clay
Drought tolerance:
Soil salt tolerances: poor
Plant spacing: 18 to 24 inches

Other

Roots: not applicable
Winter interest: no special winter interest
Outstanding plant: not particularly outstanding
Invasive potential: aggressive, spreading plant
Pest resistance: very sensitive to one or more pests or diseases which can affect plant health or aesthetics

Use and Management

Aluminum Plant forms a thick ground cover within 2 years after planting on 18-inch centers. Unrooted stems can be struck into the ground and will root if kept moist in a shaded location. You can propagate the plant quickly in this manner. Locate the plant in a fully shaded location since foliage on Aluminum Plant will discolor in the sun. Provide for irrigation in dry weather and fertilize regularly to keep the plant thick and looking nice.

Pests and Diseases

Mites can spoil the foliage in hot, dry weather. Locate in the full shade to prevent this.