



Cooperative Extension Service  
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

## *Plumbago auriculata*<sup>1</sup>

Edward F. Gilman<sup>2</sup>

### Introduction

This sprawling, mounding, somewhat vine-like, evergreen shrub is quite outstanding because it is covered most of the year with clusters of pale blue, phlox-like flowers (Fig. 1). *Plumbago* is excellent as a foundation planting, or when used in planters. It will cascade down a retaining wall, showing off the unusual blue flowers. It has also been sheared into a hedge but most of the flowers are removed at each pruning.

### General Information

**Scientific name:** *Plumbago auriculata*

**Pronunciation:** plum-BAY-go ah-rick-yoo-LAY-tuh

**Common name(s):** Plumbago, Cape Plumbago, Sky Flower

**Family:** *Plumbaginaceae*

**Plant type:** shrub

**USDA hardiness zones:** 9 through 11 (Fig. 2)

**Planting month for zone 9:** year round

**Planting month for zone 10 and 11:** year round

**Origin:** not native to North America

**Uses:** border; mass planting; container or above-ground planter; hedge; attracts butterflies

**Availability:** generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

### Description

**Height:** 6 to 10 feet

**Spread:** 8 to 10 feet

**Plant habit:** spreading; round

**Plant density:** moderate

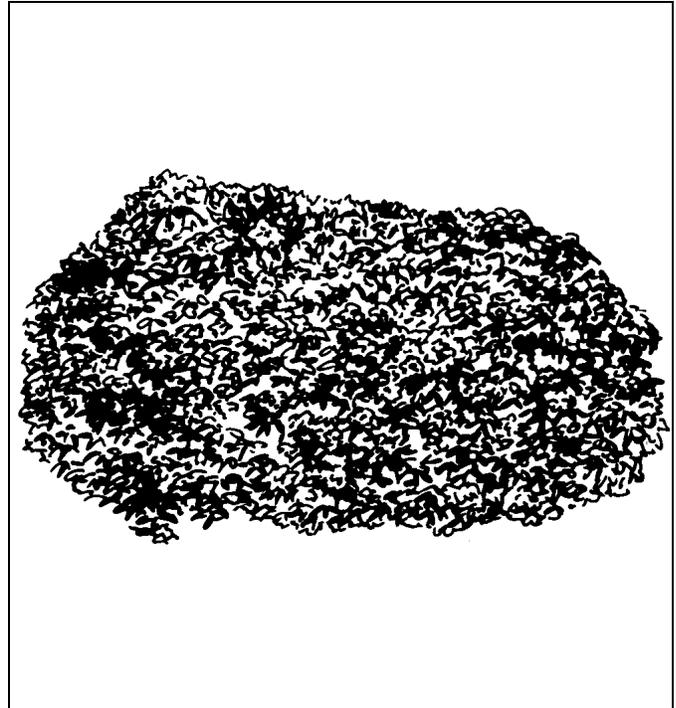


Figure 1. *Plumbago*.

**Growth rate:** fast

**Texture:** fine

#### Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** undulate

1. This document is Fact Sheet FPS-487, one of a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: October, 1999 Please visit the EDIS Web site at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.
2. Edward F. Gilman, professor, Environmental Horticulture Department, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, 32611.

The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer authorized to provide research, educational information and other services only to individuals and institutions that function without regard to race, color, sex, age, handicap, or national origin. For information on obtaining other extension publications, contact your county Cooperative Extension Service office. Florida Cooperative Extension Service / Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences / University of Florida / Christine Taylor Waddill, Dean



Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**Leaf shape:** oblong  
**Leaf venation:** brachidodrome  
**Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen  
**Leaf blade length:** less than 2 inches  
**Leaf color:** green  
**Fall color:** no fall color change  
**Fall characteristic:** not showy

**Flower**

**Flower color:** blue  
**Flower characteristic:** year-round flowering; pleasant fragrance

**Fruit**

**Fruit shape:** elongated  
**Fruit length:** less than .5 inch  
**Fruit cover:** dry or hard  
**Fruit color:** brown  
**Fruit characteristic:** inconspicuous and not showy

**Trunk and Branches**

**Trunk/bark/branches:** not particularly showy; typically multi-trunked or clumping stems  
**Current year stem/twig color:** green  
**Current year stem/twig thickness:** thin

**Culture**

**Light requirement:** plant grows in part shade/part sun  
**Soil tolerances:** clay; sand; acidic; loam; slightly alkaline  
**Drought tolerance:** moderate  
**Soil salt tolerances:** unknown  
**Plant spacing:** 36 to 60 inches

**Other**

**Roots:** sprouts from roots or lower trunk  
**Winter interest:** plant has winter interest due to unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter trunk, or winter flowers  
**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

Needing full sun for best growth and flowering, Plumbago will grow on any fertile, well-drained soil, becoming drought-tolerant once established. Leaves may yellow on soils with a high pH, indicating mineral-deficiency. Plumbago responds well to an application or two of fertilizer during the growing season to encourage continuous growth and flowering. Excessive growth can be removed at any time of year.

Plants in north-central Florida quickly recover in the spring following a killing freeze. Allow four to six feet between plants in a mass planting so the natural cascading, fountain shape develops. Plumbago also looks attractive as a specimen if located in a low ground cover.

The variety 'Alba' has white flowers.

Propagation is by seed, cuttings, or division.

Pest problems include cottony cushion scale and mites.

## Pests and Diseases

No diseases are of major concern.

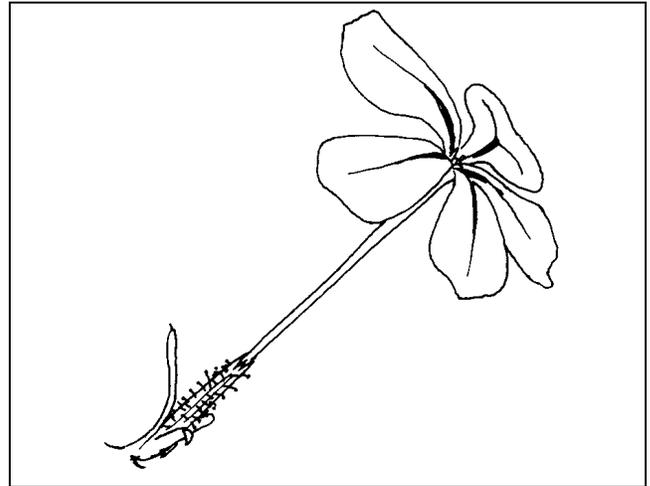


Figure 3. Flower of Plumbago