



Cooperative Extension Service
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

Portulaca grandiflora¹

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Introduction

Moss Rose grows well in hot, dry areas in rock gardens, as an edging plant and when interplanted in bulb beds (Fig. 1). *Portulaca grandiflora* has a flatter leaf than the nearly cylindrical leaf of the *Portulaca oleracea*. The plants are decorated with a profusion of brilliant jewel-toned blooms throughout the year in south Florida. Freezing temperatures knock plants to the ground in more northern areas, but self-seeded plants may come up the following year. A sunny growing area and a light soil gives the best growth. The plants are six to nine inches tall and are spaced ten to twelve inches apart to form a tight ground cover several months after planting. The flowers of some varieties close at night and on cloudy days.

General Information

Scientific name: *Portulaca grandiflora*

Pronunciation: por-too-LAY-kuh gran-diff-FLOR-ruh

Common name(s): Purslane, Moss Rose, Rose Moss

Family: *Portulacaceae*

Plant type: herbaceous

USDA hardiness zones: all zones (Fig. 2)

Planting month for zone 7: Jun; Jul

Planting month for zone 8: May; Jun; Jul

Planting month for zone 9: May; Sep; Oct

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: Apr; May; Oct; Nov

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: container or above-ground planter; naturalizing; edging; hanging basket; cascading down a wall

Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

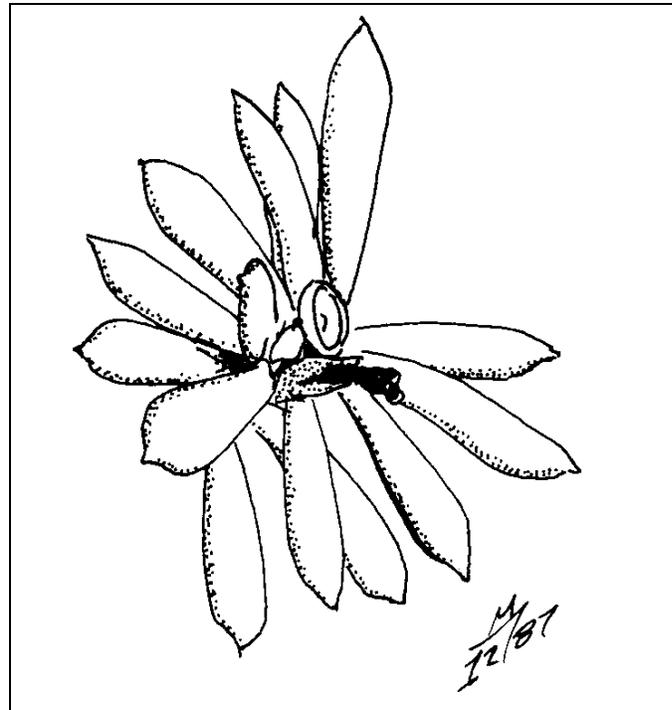


Figure 1. Purslane.

Description

Height: 0 to .5 feet

Spread: 1 to 2 feet

Plant habit: round; spreading

Plant density: moderate

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: fine

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: entire
Leaf shape: linear
Leaf venation: none, or difficult to see
Leaf type and persistence: not applicable
Leaf blade length: less than 2 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: not applicable
Fall characteristic: not applicable

Flower

Flower color: pink; red; yellow; white; salmon; lavender; purple
Flower characteristic: showy

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: not applicable
Current year stem/twig color: reddish
Current year stem/twig thickness: thick

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in full sun
Soil tolerances: slightly alkaline; clay; sand; acidic; loam
Drought tolerance: high
Soil salt tolerances: unknown
Plant spacing: 12 to 18 inches

Other

Roots: not applicable

Winter interest: not applicable

Outstanding plant: not particularly outstanding

Invasive potential: may self-seed each year

Pest resistance: no serious pests are normally seen on the plant

Use and Management

Moss Rose usually dies at the first frost but in warm climates is used as an annual ground cover. The plant tolerates hot and dry conditions such as rock gardens or exposed banks better than most low-growing colorful plants. It grows poorly in shaded, wet soils. Moss Rose can become weedy in warm climates as it self-seeds readily. It is occasionally direct-seeded into the garden. Scatter the seeds on the soil surface then lightly rake in. The seed germinates in 10 to 14 days at 70-degrees F.

There are many cultivars. 'Calypso' is an F2 hybrid mixture of colors with double flowers; 'Sundance' have semi-double flowers that remain open most of the day. Propagation is by seeds or cuttings.

Purslane is relatively pest-free and is only occasionally bothered by mealy bugs.

Pests and Diseases

Purslane is susceptible to root rot on poorly drained soils. Be sure to locate it in full-day sun for best growth and flowering.

White rust causes swollen, badly formed branches and leaves, which bear white pustules. The shoots become more erect and spindly. Remove and destroy infected plants in the fall.

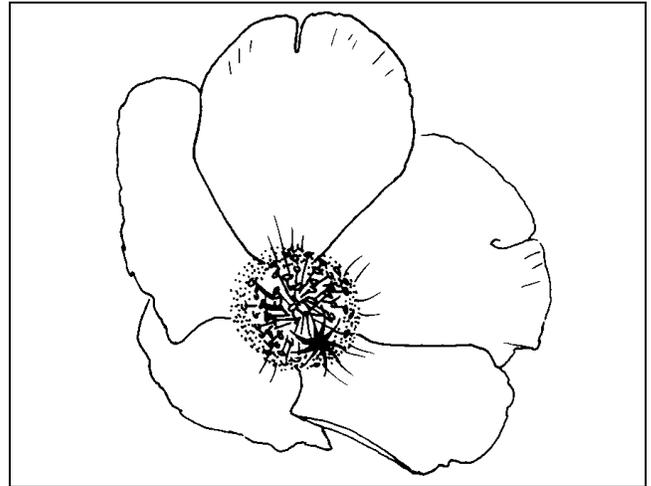


Figure 3. Flower of Purslane