



Cooperative Extension Service
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

*Russelia equisetiformis*¹

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Introduction

Firecracker Plant is a weeping shrub that, when in full bloom, looks as if it is raining flowers (Fig. 1). These slender, red, tubular flowers appear in the summer and hang on the plant like little firecrackers during most of the year. The flowers occur in 12-inch-long sprays and are a delight to the onlooker. The slim and pendulous branches of this plant lack foliage; the leaves are reduced to bracts. However, the branches and bracts are of fine texture and have a very pleasant color. The fruit of Firecracker Plant are small, inconspicuous, and also hang in clusters.

General Information

Scientific name: *Russelia equisetiformis*

Pronunciation: russ-SEEL-lee-uh eck-kwiss-see-tiff-FOR-miss

Common name(s): Firecracker Plant

Family: *Scrophulariaceae*

Plant type: shrub

USDA hardiness zones: 9B 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: specimen; foundation; border; mass planting; cascading down a wall; accent

Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

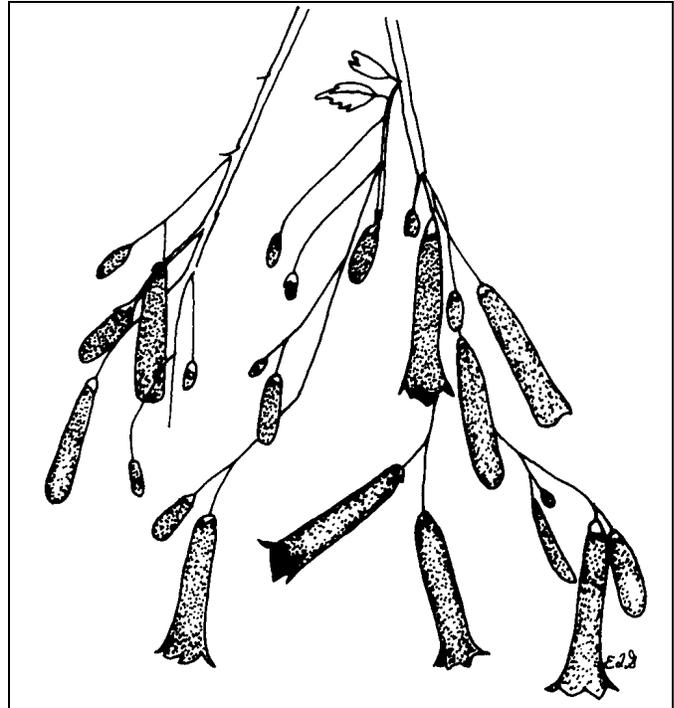


Figure 1. Firecracker Plant.

Height: 3 to 5 feet

Spread: 6 to 12 feet

Plant habit: weeping

Plant density: moderate

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: fine

Foliage

Description

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite

Leaf type: leaves rare

Leaf margin: dentate

Leaf shape: ovate

Leaf venation: none, or difficult to see

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen

Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: red

Flower characteristic: year-round flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: oval

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: typically multi-trunked or clumping stems; not particularly showy

Current year stem/twig color: green

Current year stem/twig thickness: thin

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in full sun

Soil tolerances: acidic; alkaline; sand; loam; clay;

Drought tolerance: high

Soil salt tolerances: good

Plant spacing: 36 to 60 inches

Other

Roots: usually not a problem

Winter interest: no special winter interest

Outstanding plant: not particularly outstanding

Invasive potential: aggressive, spreading plant

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

Use and Management

This 4-foot-high shrub can be used as an unclipped hedge if there is enough space to accommodate its wide spreading habit. It is also useful as a tall ground cover. It is quite charming in a container or large hanging basket and is lovely when cascading over a wall. Branches droop several feet down the side of a container.

The Firecracker Plant is tolerant of different types of soils as long as they are well-drained. It does require full sun for best flowering and fullest growth. Plants tolerate extended drought once established. Unfortunately, plants can escape cultivation and have been found forming thickets on disturbed sites such as along roadsides and embankments.

Propagation of Firecracker Plant is by simple layers and cuttings.

Pests and Diseases

Russelia equisetiformis is occasionally bothered by chewing insects, nematodes, and mites.