



Cooperative Extension Service
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

*Physostegia virginiana*¹

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Introduction

This native, herbaceous perennial grows up to about 3-feet-tall in one season, flowering in mid-summer to fall in prominent spikes (Fig. 1). Plants provide the landscape with the same effect as snapdragons. Flowers are arranged in four rows along the spike forming a showy head of white to rose-purple inflorescence.

General Information

Scientific name: *Physostegia virginiana*

Pronunciation: fye-soe-STEE-jee-uh ver-jin-nee-AY-nuh

Common name(s): False Dragonhead, Obedient Plant

Family: *Labiatae*

Plant type: perennial; herbaceous

USDA hardiness zones: 4 through 10A (Fig. 2)

Planting month for zone 7: year round

Planting month for zone 8: year round

Planting month for zone 9: year round

Origin: native to North America

Uses: naturalizing; cut flowers; mass planting

Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant

Description

Height: 2 to 3 feet

Spread: .5 to 1 feet

Plant habit: upright

Plant density: open

Growth rate: fast

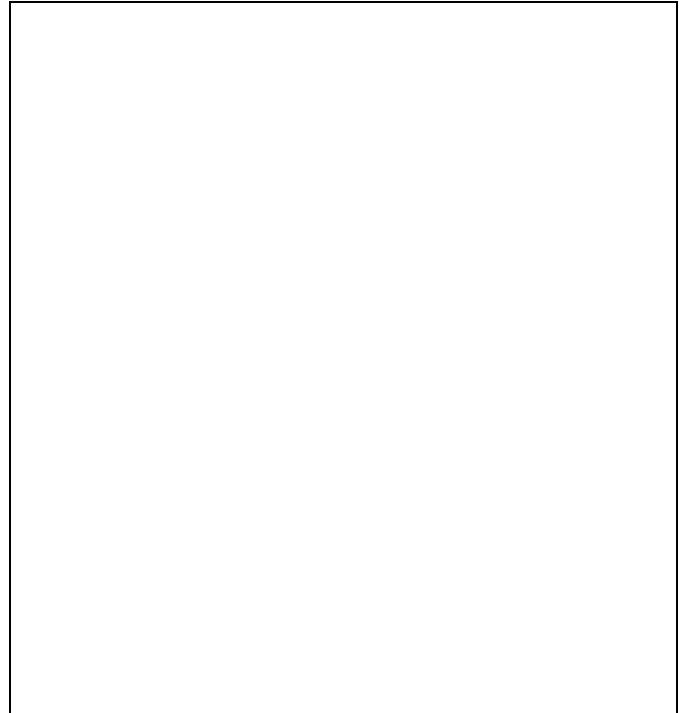


Figure 1. False Dragonhead.

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: serrate

Leaf shape: oblong

1. This document is Fact Sheet FPS-477, 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>.
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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Leaf venation: none, or difficult to see

Leaf type and persistence: deciduous

Leaf blade length: 4 to 8 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: white; rose-purple

Flower characteristic: summer flowering; fall 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: usually with one stem/trunk

Current year stem/twig color: green

Current year stem/twig thickness: thick

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun

Soil tolerances: occasionally wet; sand; clay; acidic; slightly alkaline; loam;

Drought tolerance: moderate

Soil salt tolerances: poor

Plant spacing: 12 to 18 inches

Other

Roots: not applicable

Winter interest: no special winter interest

Outstanding plant: not particularly outstanding

Invasive potential: may self-seed each year

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

Use and Management

Dragonhead is used in perennial borders as an accent when it is in bloom. Clumps spread rapidly by seed so be prepared to divide it and replant to control the lateral spread of the plant. They are especially suited to wet soils and suffer unless they receive irrigation in dry weather. Expect them to be shorter in dry landscapes.

Cultivars and varieties have been selected for flower color and include var. *alba* with pure white flowers; 'Bouquet Rose' with pink flowers; and 'Variegata' with green and white variegated leaves. 'Summer Snow' is reportedly less invasive than the species.

Pests and Diseases

A rust fungus occasionally spoils the plant.

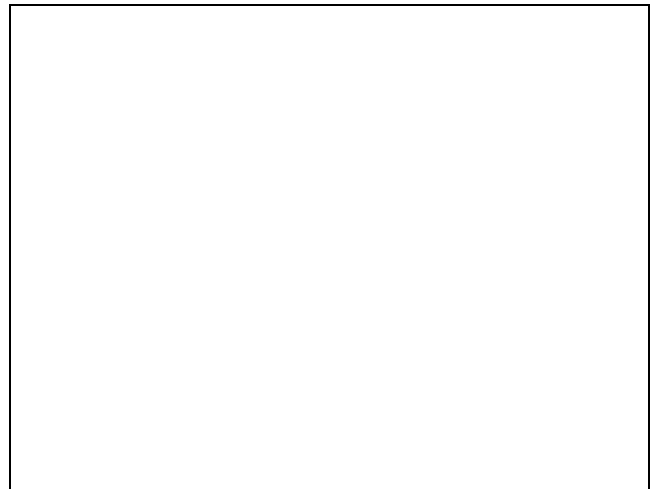


Figure 3. Flower of False Dragonhead