



Cooperative Extension Service
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

*Tropaeolum spp.*¹

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Introduction

Nasturtium is an uncommon plant occasionally seen in the garden center. Plants display round leaves on long petioles emerging from a shortened stem. Bright, showy, red or orange flowers are held among the foliage and remain partially hidden from view. Foliage on some selections is a beautiful variegated green and white

General Information

Scientific name: *Tropaeolum spp.*

Pronunciation: troe-PEE-oh-lum species

Common name(s): Watercress, Nasturtium

Family: *Tropaeolaceae*

Plant type: herbaceous

USDA hardiness zones: all zones (Fig. 1)

Planting month for zone 7: Jun; Jul

Planting month for zone 8: May; Jun

Planting month for zone 9: Mar; Apr; Oct; Nov

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: Nov; Dec; Jan; Feb; Mar

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: container or above-ground planter; mass planting; edging; border; culinary; attracts hummingbirds; hanging basket

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

Description

Height: 1 to 1.5 feet

Spread: 1 to 2 feet

Plant habit: round

Plant density: dense

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: coarse

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: most emerge from the soil, usually without a stem

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: undulate; lobed

Leaf shape: orbiculate

Leaf venation: palmate

Leaf type and persistence: not applicable

Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches

Leaf color: variegated

Fall color: not applicable

Fall characteristic: not applicable

Flower

Flower color: red; orange

Flower characteristic: summer flowering; flower season is longer in zones 9-11

Fruit

Fruit shape: no fruit

Fruit length: no fruit

Fruit cover: no fruit

Fruit color: not applicable

Fruit characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

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Figure 1. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Trunk and Branches

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

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun
Soil tolerances: occasionally wet; acidic; sand; loam; clay;
Drought tolerance: moderate
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: long-term health usually not affected by pests

Use and Management

The plant can be used along a walk or as a border at the edge of a landscape bed. The foliage stays fresh looking provided the plants receive some afternoon shade. They look best when provided with occasional irrigation when the weather gets dry.

Plants are useful in salads. Both flowers and foliage can be eaten and are quite nice. Surprise guests by picking bright flowers from the garden and include them in the salad.