

Jatropha integerrima Peregrina¹

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INTRODUCTION

This slender-stemmed, multi-trunked tropical evergreen tree or large shrub, a native of Cuba, reaches 15 feet in height with an equal spread, and has unusual seven-inch-long leaves varying in shape from oblong, fiddle-shaped, or even-lobed (Fig. 1). The one-inch-wide red flowers are produced year-round in beautiful clusters held upright above the foliage and helps make Fire-cracker an interesting specimen plant. The seed capsules which follow hold several smooth, speckled, and toxic seeds, a fact which must be considered when placing this plant in the landscape; it should be kept out of the reach of children.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Jatropha integerrima*

Pronunciation: jat-ROE-fuh in-teh-GAIR-rih-muh

Common name(s): Peregrina, Fire-Cracker

Family: *Euphorbiaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 10B through 11 (Fig. 2)

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: container or above-ground planter; recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; near a deck or patio; trainable as a standard; specimen; no proven urban tolerance

Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

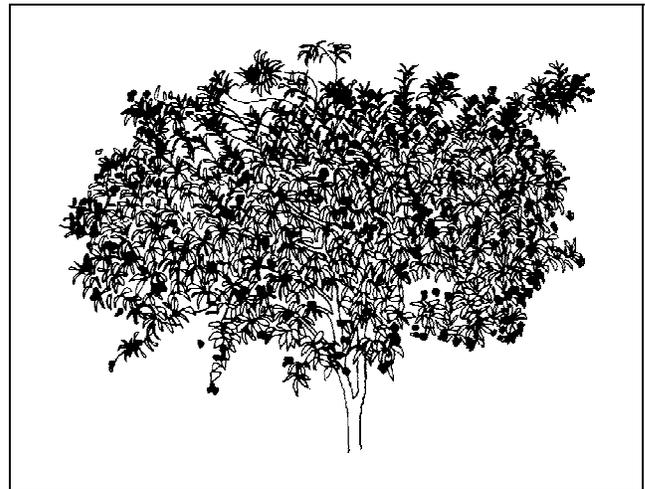


Figure 1. Middle-aged Peregrina.

DESCRIPTION

Height: 10 to 15 feet

Spread: 10 to 15 feet

Crown uniformity: symmetrical canopy with a regular (or smooth) outline, and individuals have more or less identical crown forms

Crown shape: round; vase shape

Crown density: open

Growth rate: medium

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: lobed

Leaf shape: oblong; obovate

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: broadleaf evergreen;
evergreen

Leaf blade length: 4 to 8 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: red

Flower characteristics: showy; year round flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: oval

Fruit length: .5 to 1 inch

Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife;
inconspicuous and not showy; no significant litter
problem

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: bark is thin and easily
damaged from mechanical impact; droop as the tree
grows, and will require pruning for vehicular or
pedestrian clearance beneath the canopy; routinely
grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple
trunks; not particularly showy; tree wants to grow with
several trunks but can be trained to grow with a single
trunk; no thorns

Pruning requirement: requires pruning to develop
strong structure

Breakage: resistant

Current year twig color: brown

Current year twig thickness: medium

Culture

Light requirement: tree grows in part shade/part sun;
tree grows in full sun

Soil tolerances: clay; loam; sand; acidic; alkaline;
well-drained

Drought tolerance: moderate

Aerosol salt tolerance: moderate

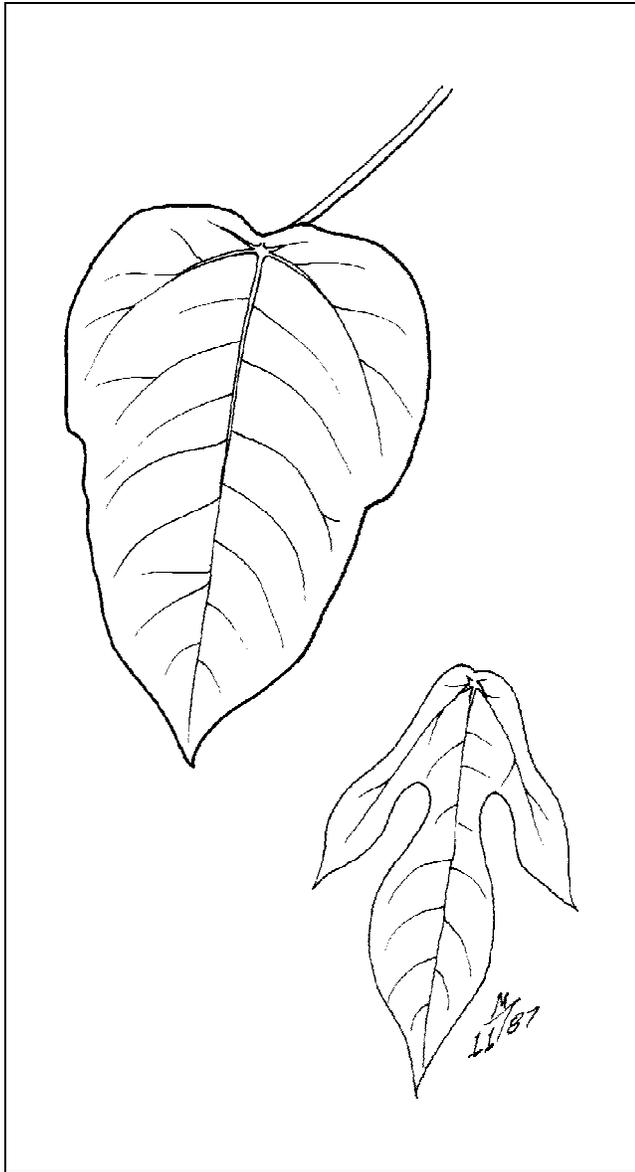


Figure 3. Foliage of Peregrina.

USE AND MANAGEMENT

Jatropha makes a delightful red-flowered accent in a shrub border planted to attract attention to an area. It flowers nearly year round and so is quite popular as a patio tree or garden accent. Multiple trunks and stems originate near the ground forming a symmetrical, weeping clump of thinly-clothed branches. The tree can be staked and trained to grow with one trunk for two or three feet. This is a nice way to display the plant as an accent or specimen. Do not expect this small tree to provide shade, but it will attract hummingbirds and butterflies.

Peregrina should be grown in full sun or partial shade on well-drained soil. Full sun plants flower best. It is not salt-tolerant.

There is a pink-flowered form available at some nurseries.

Propagation is by seed or cuttings.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern but occasionally bothered by mites, scales, and superficial leaf miner.

Other

Roots: surface roots are usually not a problem

Winter interest: tree has winter interest due to unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter trunk, or winter flowers

Outstanding tree: tree has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more

Invasive potential: little, if any, potential at this time

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