Alternanthera maritima

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Introduction

This drought tolerant, ground hugging creeper thrives in its native habitat on the seaside dunes (Fig. 1). Stems creep along the sand, rooting at the nodes and sending up new shoots. The plant quickly covers an area in this manner growing to about 6-inches tall.

General Information

Scientific name: Alternanthera maritima
Pronunciation: al-tur-nan-THERR-uh muh-RIT-tim-uh
Common name(s): Alternanthera
Family: Amaranthaceae
Plant type: herbaceous; ground cover
USDA hardiness zones: 9 through 11 (Fig. 2)
Planting month for zone 9: year round
Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round
Origin: native to Florida
Uses: ground cover; cascading down a wall
Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant

Description

Height: .5 to 1 feet
Spread: depends upon supporting structure
Plant habit: spreading
Plant density: moderate
Growth rate: fast
Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: entire
Leaf shape: elliptic (oval)
Leaf venation: pinnate
Leaf type and persistence: evergreen

Figure 1. Alternanthera.
Alternanthera maritima

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Leaf blade length: less than 2 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: no fall color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: unknown
Flower characteristic: unknown

Fruit

Fruit shape: unknown
Fruit length: less than .5 inch
Fruit cover: unknown
Fruit color: unknown
Fruit characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

Trunk and Branches

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

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in full sun
Soil tolerances: acidic; slightly alkaline; sand; loam;
Drought tolerance: high
Soil salt tolerances: good
Plant spacing: 36 to 60 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

Plant on 3- to 4-foot centers in order to quickly establish a dense ground cover. Plants in the full sun grow best. The moderately thick stems will cascade and cover a wall nicely.
Pests and Diseases

Plants in the full sun should not be affected by lethal pest and disease problems.