



Cooperative Extension Service
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

*Canna x generalis*¹

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Introduction

Cannas are large plants growing to six feet tall and do well during the heat of summer (Fig. 1). The leaves are 18 to 36 inches long and light green, providing a very coarse texture to the landscape. Although they are often planted alone or in small numbers, they look best in mass plantings. They provide lots of contrast to the landscape and attract attention. Plants may be started indoors in large pots before they are set out after all danger of frost has passed. Rhizomes can be directly planted in the ground in late spring and into the summer. Flower colors are white, yellow, red, red-orange or pink. Some staking may be necessary as is the removal of dead blooms in order to provide for a neat appearance. In southern climates, rhizomes are left in the ground to grow and flower each year. Following the first frost in northern climates, cut back to within six to eight inches, and dig the rhizomes. Place them in dry peat and keep them in the dark at temperatures between 45 and 50-degrees F.

General Information

Scientific name: *Canna x generalis*

Pronunciation: KAN-uh jen-nur-RAL-liss

Common name(s): Canna, Garden Canna

Family: *Cannaceae*

Plant type: perennial; herbaceous; annual

USDA hardiness zones: 4 through 11 (Fig. 2)

Planting month for zone 7: Apr; May

Planting month for zone 8: Mar; Apr; May

Planting month for zone 9: Feb; Mar; Apr

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: Feb; Mar; Apr

Origin: not native to North America



Figure 1. Canna.

Uses: container or above-ground planter; border

Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

Description

Height: 2 to 5 feet

Spread: 1 to 2 feet

Plant habit: upright

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Plant density: open

Growth rate: fast

Texture: coarse

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: ovate

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: deciduous

Leaf blade length: 18 to 36 inches

Leaf color: purple or red

Fall color: not applicable

Fall characteristic: not applicable

Flower

Flower color: yellow; pink

Flower characteristic: summer flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: unknown

Fruit length: unknown

Fruit cover: unknown

Fruit color: brown

Fruit characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: typically multi-trunked or clumping stems

Current year stem/twig color: not applicable

Current year stem/twig thickness: not applicable

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in full sun

Soil tolerances: slightly alkaline; clay; sand; acidic; 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: plant has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more

Invasive potential: not known to be invasive

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

Use and Management

Cannas enjoy full sun locations where they produce an abundance of flowers over a long period of time. The plant grows but flowers poorly in the shade. Set rhizomes about 12 inches apart for a solid mass of coarse-textured bright color during the summer. The roots may be divided in the spring with each division having one or more eyes.

Japanese beetle feeds on young leaves and flower buds. Use milky spore to help control larvae in the soil. Some caterpillars feed on the leaves.

Pests and Diseases

Bud rot causes numerous spots on unfolding leaves. The spots run together along veins. They may be whitish at first but soon turn black. Infected flower buds turn black and die before opening. The disease moves down the leaf stalk, killing young stems and buds. On older leaves, the disease spreads slowly, forming irregular, yellowish spots with water-soaked margins. Use only healthy roots.

Canna mosaic virus causes leaves to have pale yellow stripes from the midrib to the margin. The leaves are wrinkled, curled, chlorotic and are often dusty brown. The stems, sepals and petals have yellow bands. Destroy infected plants and control the aphids which spread the disease.

Aster yellows causes irregular, diffuse, dull yellowing of young leaves which turn brown with age. Infected plants are destroyed. The disease is spread by aphids.