**Coleus x hybridus**

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## Introduction

Although Coleus does flower, it is grown for its brightly colored leaves (Fig. 1). The plant grows in sun to partial shade and requires a lot of water. Coleus reaches 20 to 24 inches tall but trailing types can be used in hanging pots. Pinch young plants or older, leggy plants to encourage branching for a fuller plant. Coleus may be used as a potted plant indoors in a sunny window or outdoors in part sun. They are sometimes planted in mass on 12 to 18 inch centers to add a splash of bright color to any landscape. A mass planting looks nice with a backdrop of green shrubs. Remove flower spikes as they appear to encourage more foliage growth. Cold wet soils and poor cultural practices can result in leaf drop.

## General Information

**Scientific name:** Coleus x hybridus  
**Pronunciation:** KOE-lee-us x HYE-brid-us  
**Common name(s):** Coleus  
**Family:** Labiatae  
**Plant type:** annual  
**USDA hardiness zones:** all zones (Fig. 2)  
**Planting month for zone 7:** Jun; Jul; Aug  
**Planting month for zone 8:** May; Jun; Jul; Aug  
**Planting month for zone 9:** Mar; Apr; May; Jun; Jul; Aug; Sep; Oct  
**Planting month for zone 10 and 11:** Mar; Apr; May; Jun; Jul; Aug; Sep; Oct  
**Origin:** not native to North America  
**Uses:** mass planting; container or above-ground planter; edging; accent

## Availability

**Height:** 1 to 3 feet  
**Spread:** 1 to 3 feet  
**Plant habit:** round  
**Plant density:** dense

## Description

**Figure 1. Coleus.**

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Growth rate: moderate
Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: crenate; lobed; undulate
Leaf shape: ovate
Leaf venation: bowed
Leaf type and persistence: not applicable
Leaf blade length: 4 to 8 inches
Leaf color: yellow; green; variegated
Fall color: not applicable
Fall characteristic: not applicable

Flower

Flower color: blue
Flower characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: no fruit
Fruit length: no fruit

Fruit cover: no fruit
Fruit color: not applicable
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: very thick

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun
Soil tolerances: clay; sand; acidic; loam
Drought tolerance:
Soil salt tolerances: unknown
Plant spacing: 12 to 18 inches

Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.
Other

Roots: not applicable  
Winter interest: not applicable  
Outstanding plant: not particularly outstanding  
Invasive potential: not known to be invasive  
Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests

Use and Management

Coleus is propagated by seed and cuttings. Cuttings as short as two inches can be taken from newly grown shoots and rooted in plain water. The seed germinates in 10 to 14 days at 70 to 75-degrees F. Light stimulates germination so seed should not be covered. Set plants outside after the weather has warmed. In USDA hardiness zones 8 to 11, coleus can be set out spring through late summer. Winter plantings are successful in south Florida in the full sun provided adequate moisture is available.

Mites cause the leaves to be puckered and distorted.