



Cooperative Extension Service
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

*Dombeya spp.*¹

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Introduction

A native of the tropical parts of Africa, Tropical Snowball is grown more for its flower display than anything else (Fig. 1). The coarse-textured foliage is simple with shallow or deep palmate lobes. Bright pink or red flowers are prominently displayed on the new growth in the summer and sporadically throughout the year. Some types have white flowers.

General Information

Scientific name: *Dombeya spp.*

Pronunciation: dom-BEE-yuh species

Common name(s): Tropical Snowball

Family: *Byttneriaceae*

Plant type: shrub

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: not native to North America

Uses: trained as a standard; accent; cut flowers; screen; foundation; border

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

Description

Height: 6 to 10 feet

Spread: 6 to 8 feet

Plant habit: oval

Plant density: dense

Growth rate: fast

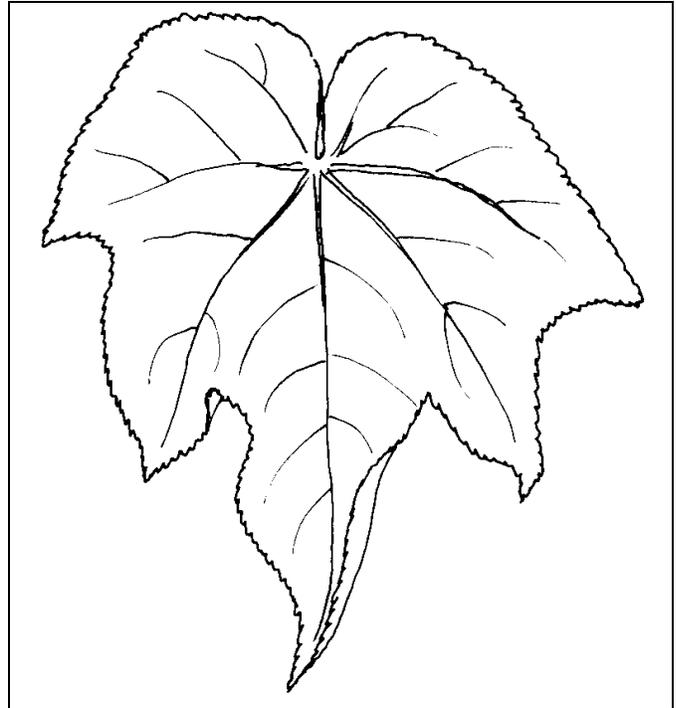


Figure 1. Tropical Snowball.

Texture: coarse

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: lobed

Leaf shape: ovate

1. This document is Fact Sheet FPS-182, one of a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: October 1999. Please visit the EDIS web site at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.
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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Leaf venation: palmate
Leaf type and persistence: evergreen
Leaf blade length: 8 to 12 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: no fall color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: red; pink
Flower characteristic: summer flowering; fall flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: unknown
Fruit length: unknown
Fruit cover: unknown
Fruit color: unknown
Fruit characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: typically multi-trunked or clumping stems; not particularly showy
Current year stem/twig color: green

Current year stem/twig thickness: medium

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in full sun
Soil tolerances: acidic; alkaline; sand; loam; clay
Drought tolerance:
Soil salt tolerances: poor
Plant spacing: 36 to 60 inches

Other

Roots: usually not a problem
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: very sensitive to one or more pests or diseases which can affect plant health or aesthetics

Use and Management

Snowball is most often used as a specimen in a shrub border or near the corner of a building. Its beautiful flowers make this a premium shrub for locating in any part of a sunny landscape. Flower number is reduced in partial shaded locations.

Tropical Snowball grows fast and adapts to a wide variety of soils. Several fertilizer applications each year help keep leaves dark green all year long. Some micronutrient deficiency symptoms appear in soils with a pH above 8.0. Regular applications with appropriate fertilizers prevent symptoms from appearing.

Pests and Diseases

Aphids and scales often infest the foliage and stems. Sooty mold often follows. Soil borne nematodes can stress the plant by reducing the size of the root system.

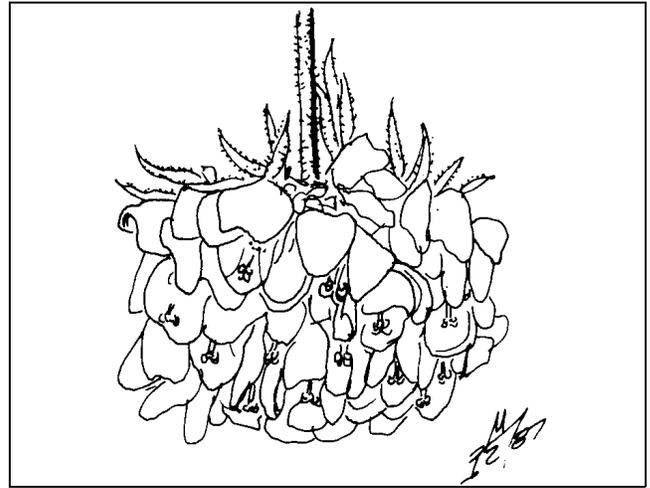


Figure 3. Flower of Tropical Snowball