**Liriope spicata**

Edward F. Gilman

**Introduction**

Thin green leaves and attractive, violet-blue flowers give this plant its charm, although flowers are not as showy as those of *Liriope muscari* (Fig. 1). It forms a dense, uniform cover, unlike *Liriope muscari* which forms clumps until well-established several years after planting. Creeping Lilyturf is a 6- to 10-inch-tall evergreen perennial that is useful in the landscape as a ground cover. This plant spreads quickly by rhizomes and can invade adjacent turf areas or other ground cover beds. Therefore, this Liriope may be best suited for planting in a bed surrounded by hardscape or confined with an edging (root barrier) that is 18-inches-deep. The small, purple flowers occur in terminal racemes that nest in with the foliage. These flowers appear in the summer and are followed by blue-black berrylike fruits. Fruits are not produced in abundance.

**General Information**

Scientific name: *Liriope spicata*

Pronunciation: luh-REY-oh-pee spy-KAY-tuh

Common name(s): Creeping Lilyturf

Family: Liliaceae

Plant type: perennial; herbaceous; ornamental grass

USDA hardiness zones: 6 through 10 (Fig. 2)

Plants month for zone 7: year round

Plants month for zone 8: year round

Plants month for zone 9: year round

Plants month for zone 10: year round

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: mass planting; edging; naturalizing

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Liriope spicata -- Creeping Lilyturf

Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Growth rate: moderate
Texture: fine

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: most emerge from the soil, usually without a stem
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: entire
Leaf shape: linear
Leaf venation: parallel
Leaf type and persistence: evergreen
Leaf blade length: 12 to 18 inches
Leaf color: variegated
Fall color: no fall color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: violet-blue
Flower characteristic: summer flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: round
Fruit length: less than .5 inch
Fruit cover: fleshy
Fruit color: black
Fruit characteristic: showy

Trunk and Branches

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

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun; plant grows in the shade
Soil tolerances: alkaline; clay; sand; acidic; loam
Drought tolerance: moderate
Soil salt tolerances: unknown
Plant spacing: 6 to 12 inches

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Other

Roots: not applicable  
Winter interest: no special winter interest  
Outstanding plant: not particularly outstanding  
Invasive potential: aggressive, spreading plant  
Pest resistance: no serious pests are normally seen on the plant

Use and Management

Creeping Lilyturf is not a good plant for bordering a sidewalk or for use as an edging because it spreads too quickly. Use *Liriope muscari* instead. But it will grow well underneath trees or around shrubs. However, like other Liriope it will not tolerate regular foot traffic.

Liriope can grow in a sunny location, but prefers one that has partial shade or full shade. It prefers well-drained soils and is moderately tolerant of drought and salt spray. Wet soil produces many suckers. This plant does have a negative reaction to high temperatures and can turn yellow and melt out in warm weather in the full sun. Liriope beds can be mowed each spring before the new growth begins to eliminate last year's unsightly foliage. This produces a clean-looking bed and improves appearance. If you wait to cut after new growth begins, you will cut off the tops of the new leaves.

Lilyturf is most often propagated by division of the clumps or tubers. It will also grow from seed if the pulp is removed.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern. Grasshoppers may occasionally damage the foliage.