



Cooperative Extension Service
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

*Peperomia obtusifolia*¹

Edward F. Gilman²

Introduction

Peperomia has round, smooth, dark green leaves and short, somewhat brittle stems, seldom growing taller than 12 inches (Fig. 1). Quickly growing into spreading clumps, Peperomia is ideal for tropical groundcover use, as well as container culture or raised planters. It also makes a durable houseplant and will cascade over the side of a hanging basket.

General Information

Scientific name: *Peperomia obtusifolia*

Pronunciation: pep-per-ROE-mee-uh ob-too-siff-FOLE-lee-uh

Common name(s): Peperomia, Baby Rubber Plant

Family: *Piperaceae*

Plant type: perennial; herbaceous

USDA hardiness zones: 10 through 11 (Fig. 2)

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: container or above-ground planter; mass planting; naturalizing; suitable for growing indoors; cascading down a wall

Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

Description

Height: .5 to 1 feet

Spread: 1 to 2 feet

Plant habit: spreading

Plant density: open

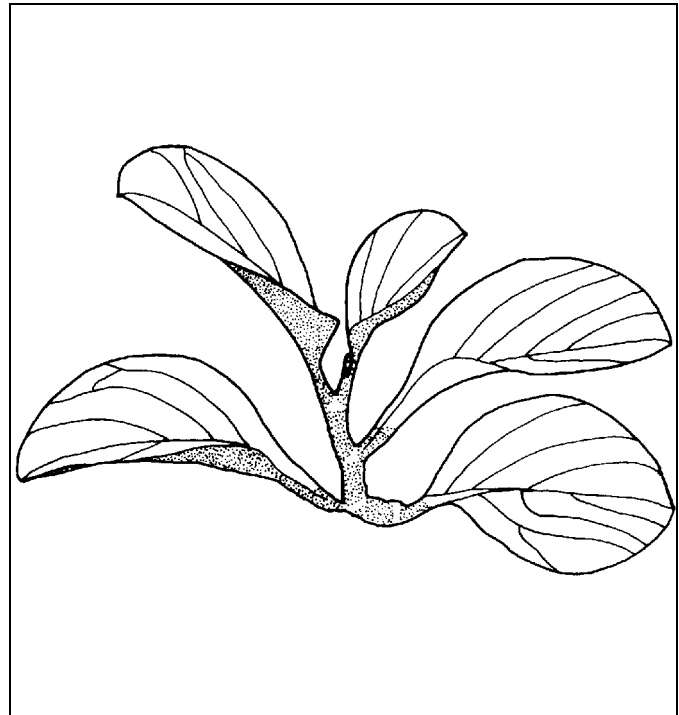


Figure 1. Peperomia.

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: coarse

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire

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2. Edward F. Gilman, professor, Environmental Horticulture Department, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, 32611.

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Leaf shape: obovate
Leaf venation: bowed
Leaf type and persistence: evergreen
Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches
Leaf color: variegated
Fall color: no fall color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: white
Flower characteristic: flowers periodically throughout the year

Fruit

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

Trunk and Branches

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

Current year stem/twig thickness: very thick

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in the shade
Soil tolerances: slightly alkaline; clay; sand; acidic; loam
Drought tolerance: moderate
Soil salt tolerances: poor
Plant spacing: 24 to 36 inches

Other

Roots: not applicable
Winter interest: no special winter interest
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

Growing in partial to deep shade, Peperomia will thrive in moist, rich, organic soils or less fertile sandy soils. Although preferring high humidity, it must have well-drained conditions to avoid stem and root rot. Plant on 12 to 18-inch centers for quick establishment as a ground cover. It is best to err on the dry side when growing Peperomia.

A few available cultivars include: 'Alba', young growth entirely white-yellow, marked with bright red; 'Albo-marginata', grey-green leaves with silvery border; 'Albo-marginata Minima', dwarf form of the preceding; 'Minima', compact plant, leaves one to two inches long; and 'Variegata', grey-green blotched green leaves with a broad, creamy-white margin.

Propagation is by cuttings which root easily or by division.

Peperomia's main pest problem is mites.

Pests and Diseases

Peperomia is susceptible to stem and root rots and leaf spot diseases.