Introduction

The variegated foliage on Aluminum Plant is unlike any other, with shiny silver, irregularly-shaped markings parallel to the lateral veins (Fig. 1). Leaves are held opposite each other on square, green stems producing a thick ground cover about 12-inches-tall in a shaded landscape. Small white flowers are produced at the ends of the stems in the summer but they are mostly overshadowed by the conspicuous foliage.

General Information

Scientific name: *Pilea cadierei*

Pronunciation: PYE-lee-uh kuh-DEER-ree-eye

Common name(s): Aluminum Plant

Family: *Urticaceae*

Plant type: ground cover

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

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: hanging basket; suitable for growing indoors; ground cover; cascading down a wall

Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

Description

Height: .5 to 1 foot

Spread: depends upon supporting structure

Plant habit: spreading

Plant density: moderate

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: serrate

Leaf shape: obovate

Figure 1. Aluminum Plant.
Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Leaf venation: pinnate  
Leaf type and persistence: evergreen  
Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches  
Leaf color: silver/gray; variegated  
Fall color: no fall color change  
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: white  
Flower characteristic: summer 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: not applicable  
Current year stem/twig color: green  
Current year stem/twig thickness: medium

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in the shade  
Soil tolerances: occasionally wet; acidic; slightly alkaline; sand; loam; clay  
Drought tolerance:  
Soil salt tolerances: poor  
Plant spacing: 18 to 24 inches

Other

Roots: not applicable  
Winter interest: no special winter interest  
Outstanding plant: not particularly outstanding  
Invasive potential: aggressive, spreading plant  
Pest resistance: very sensitive to one or more pests or diseases which can affect plant health or aesthetics
Use and Management

Aluminum Plant forms a thick ground cover within 2 years after planting on 18-inch centers. Unrooted stems can be struck into the ground and will root if kept moist in a shaded location. You can propagate the plant quickly in this manner. Locate the plant in a fully shaded location since foliage on Aluminum Plant will discolor in the sun. Provide for irrigation in dry weather and fertilize regularly to keep the plant thick and looking nice.

Pests and Diseases

Mites can spoil the foliage in hot, dry weather. Locate in the full shade to prevent this.