



Cooperative Extension Service
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

*Plumbago auriculata*¹

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Introduction

This sprawling, mounding, somewhat vine-like, evergreen shrub is quite outstanding because it is covered most of the year with clusters of pale blue, phlox-like flowers (Fig. 1). *Plumbago* is excellent as a foundation planting, or when used in planters. It will cascade down a retaining wall, showing off the unusual blue flowers. It has also been sheared into a hedge but most of the flowers are removed at each pruning.

General Information

Scientific name: *Plumbago auriculata*

Pronunciation: plum-BAY-go ah-rick-yoo-LAY-tuh

Common name(s): Plumbago, Cape Plumbago, Sky Flower

Family: *Plumbaginaceae*

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: border; mass planting; container or above-ground planter; hedge; attracts butterflies

Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

Description

Height: 6 to 10 feet

Spread: 8 to 10 feet

Plant habit: spreading; round

Plant density: moderate

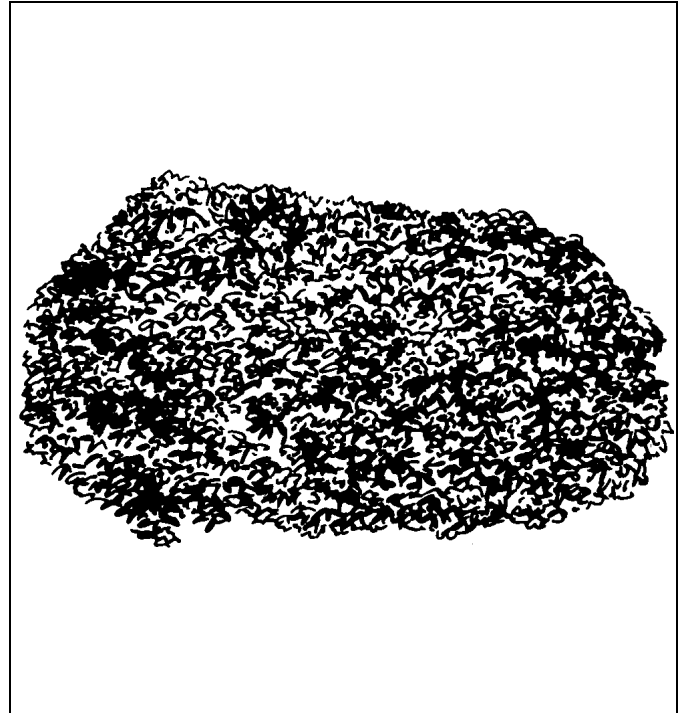


Figure 1. Plumbago.

Growth rate: fast

Texture: fine

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: undulate

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Leaf shape: oblong
Leaf venation: brachidodrome
Leaf type and persistence: evergreen
Leaf blade length: less than 2 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: no fall color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: blue
Flower characteristic: year-round flowering; pleasant fragrance

Fruit

Fruit shape: elongated
Fruit length: less than .5 inch
Fruit cover: dry or hard
Fruit color: brown
Fruit characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

Trunk and Branches

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

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun
Soil tolerances: clay; sand; acidic; loam; slightly alkaline
Drought tolerance: moderate
Soil salt tolerances: unknown
Plant spacing: 36 to 60 inches

Other

Roots: sprouts from roots or lower trunk
Winter interest: plant has winter interest due to unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter trunk, or winter flowers
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

Needing full sun for best growth and flowering, Plumbago will grow on any fertile, well-drained soil, becoming drought-tolerant once established. Leaves may yellow on soils with a high pH, indicating mineral-deficiency. Plumbago responds well to an application or two of fertilizer during the growing season to encourage continuous growth and flowering. Excessive growth can be removed at any time of year.

Plants in north-central Florida quickly recover in the spring following a killing freeze. Allow four to six feet between plants in a mass planting so the natural cascading, fountain shape develops. Plumbago also looks attractive as a specimen if located in a low ground cover.

The variety 'Alba' has white flowers.

Propagation is by seed, cuttings, or division.

Pest problems include cottony cushion scale and mites.

Pests and Diseases

No diseases are of major concern.

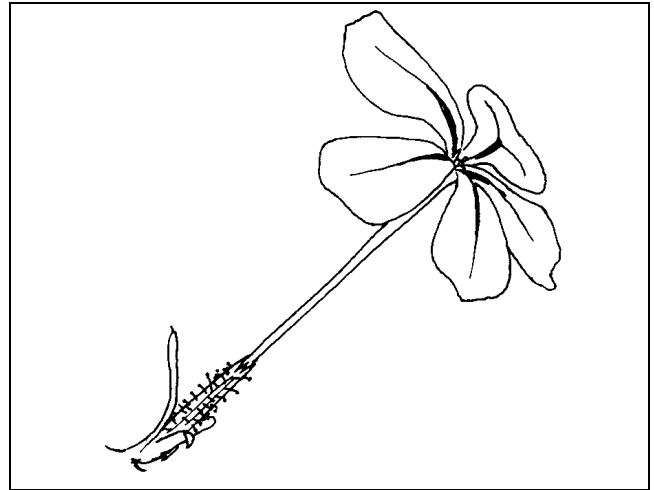


Figure 3. Flower of Plumbago