# Ruellia brittoniana<sup>1</sup>

Edward F. Gilman<sup>2</sup>

### Introduction

Mexican Bluebell is an upright or spreading perennial that is known as a strong grower under adverse conditions (Fig. 1). This 18- to 30-inch-tall plant has light green leaves that are medium in texture. Blue, violet, red or pink flowers appear on this perennial in the spring, summer and fall. These flowers are showy, and their nectar is appealing to various species of butterflies. Plants can grow into small flowering shrubs in the warmest parts of south Florida where freezes do not occur.

## **General Information**

Scientific name: Ruellia brittoniana

Pronunciation: roo-EL-lee-uh brit-TOE-nee-uh

Common name(s): Mexican Bluebell

Family: Acanthaceae

Plant type: perennial; herbaceous

**USDA hardiness zones:** 8B through 11 (Fig. 2)

Planting month for zone 8: year round Planting month for zone 9: year round

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round

Origin: not native to North America

**Uses:** ground cover; mass planting; attracts butterflies

Availablity: grown in small quantities by a small number of

nurseries

# **Description**

**Height:** 2 to 3 feet **Spread:** 1 to 2 feet

Plant habit: spreading; upright

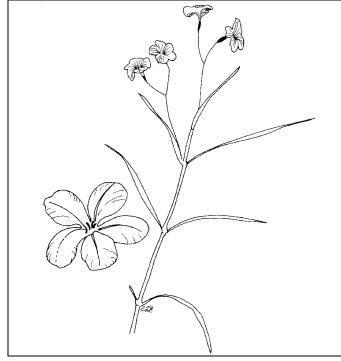


Figure 1. Mexican Bluebell.

Plant density: moderate Growth rate: moderate

Texture: fine

**Foliage** 

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite

Leaf type: simple

- This document is Fact Sheet FPS-513, 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.
- Edward F. Gilman, professor, Environmental Horticulture Department, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University
  of Florida, Gainesville, 32611.

The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer authorized to provide research, educational information and other services only to individuals and institutions that function without regard to race, color, sex, age, handicap, or national origin. For information on obtaining other extension publications, contact your county Cooperative Extension Service of Florida Cooperative Extension Service / Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences / University of Florida / Christine Taylor Waddill, Dean



Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Leaf margin: entire
Leaf shape: linear
Leaf venation: parallel

**Leaf type and persistence:** deciduous **Leaf blade length:** 8 to 12 inches

Leaf color: green

**Fall color:** no fall color change **Fall characteristic:** not showy

#### Flower

Flower color: blue; violet; red; pink

Flower characteristic: spring flowering; 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

Current year stem/twig color: reddish Current year stem/twig thickness: thin

## Culture

**Light requirement:** plant grows in the shade

Soil tolerances: occasionally wet; acidic; sand; loam; clay;

**Drought tolerance:** moderate **Soil salt tolerances:** poor **Plant spacing:** 24 to 36 inches

# **Other**

Roots: sprouts from roots or lower trunk
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**

Mexican Bluebell may be used as ground covers and in perennial borders. They are attractive when massed together or planted in a container where flexible stems droop over the pot.

Place Ruellia in an area of the landscape that receives full to partial shade. These species will grow best in well-drained soils and are very drought and salt tolerant. Ruellia species will be frozen to the ground in the winter but regrowth should occur from the roots.

These plants may be propagated by seed or cuttings. Ruellia can become invasive, as it readily reseeds itself.

#### **Pests and Diseases**

No pests or diseases are of major concern.