



Cooperative Extension Service  
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

## ***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

**Availability:** grown in small quantities by a small number of nurseries



**Figure 1.** Mexican Bluebell.

**Plant density:** moderate

**Growth rate:** moderate

**Texture:** fine

### **Foliage**

**Leaf arrangement:** opposite/subopposite

**Leaf type:** simple

### **Description**

**Height:** 2 to 3 feet

**Spread:** 1 to 2 feet

**Plant habit:** spreading; upright

1. 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>.
2. 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 office. 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.