



Cooperative Extension Service  
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

## ***Russelia equisetiformis***<sup>1</sup>

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### **Introduction**

Firecracker Plant is a weeping shrub that, when in full bloom, looks as if it is raining flowers (Fig. 1). These slender, red, tubular flowers appear in the summer and hang on the plant like little firecrackers during most of the year. The flowers occur in 12-inch-long sprays and are a delight to the onlooker. The slim and pendulous branches of this plant lack foliage; the leaves are reduced to bracts. However, the branches and bracts are of fine texture and have a very pleasant color. The fruit of Firecracker Plant are small, inconspicuous, and also hang in clusters.

### **General Information**

**Scientific name:** *Russelia equisetiformis*

**Pronunciation:** russ-SEEL-lee-uh eck-kwiss-see-tiff-FOR-miss

**Common name(s):** Firecracker Plant

**Family:** *Scrophulariaceae*

**Plant type:** shrub

**USDA hardiness zones:** 9B through 11 (Fig. 2)

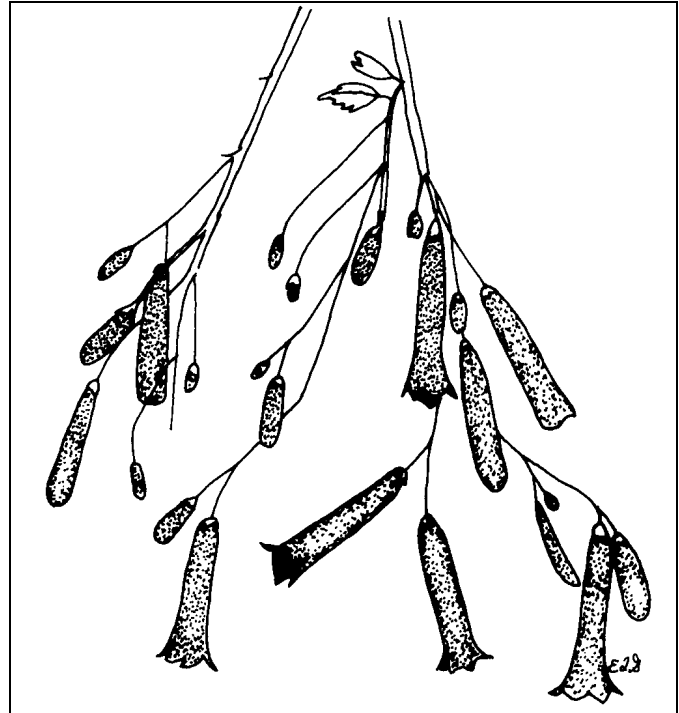
**Planting month for zone 9:** year round

**Planting month for zone 10 and 11:** year round

**Origin:** not native to North America

**Uses:** specimen; foundation; border; mass planting; cascading down a wall; accent

**Availability:** generally available in many areas within its hardiness range



**Figure 1.** Firecracker Plant.

**Height:** 3 to 5 feet

**Spread:** 6 to 12 feet

**Plant habit:** weeping

**Plant density:** moderate

**Growth rate:** moderate

**Texture:** fine

### **Foliage**

### **Description**

1. This document is Fact Sheet FPS-516, 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>.
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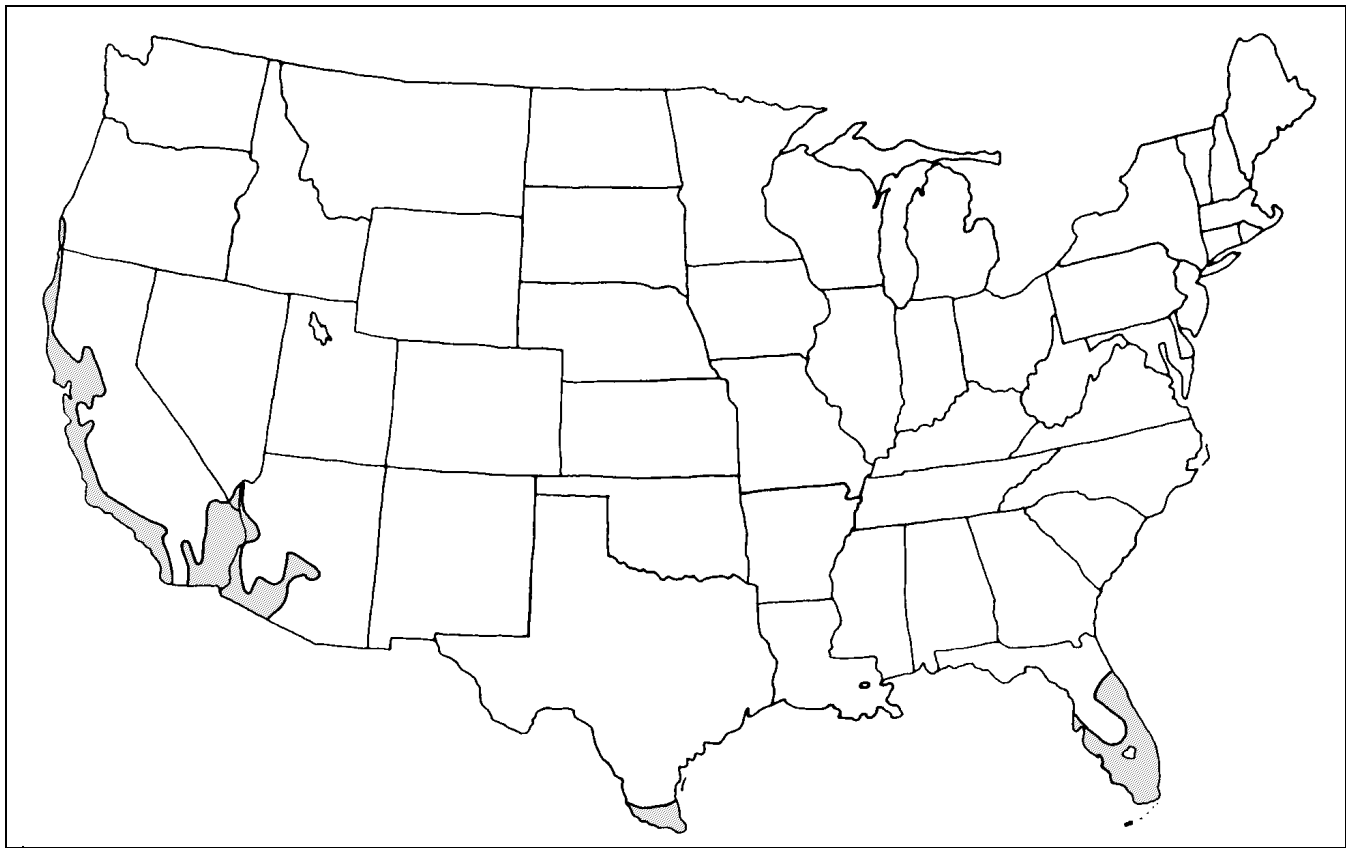


Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**Leaf arrangement:** opposite/subopposite

**Leaf type:** leaves rare

**Leaf margin:** dentate

**Leaf shape:** ovate

**Leaf venation:** none, or difficult to see

**Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen

**Leaf blade length:** 2 to 4 inches

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** no fall color change

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

#### Flower

**Flower color:** red

**Flower characteristic:** year-round flowering

#### Fruit

**Fruit shape:** oval

**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:** typically multi-trunked or clumping stems; not particularly showy

**Current year stem/twig color:** green

**Current year stem/twig thickness:** thin

#### Culture

**Light requirement:** plant grows in full sun

**Soil tolerances:** acidic; alkaline; sand; loam; clay;

**Drought tolerance:** high

**Soil salt tolerances:** good

**Plant spacing:** 36 to 60 inches

#### Other

**Roots:** usually not a problem

**Winter interest:** no special winter interest

**Outstanding plant:** not particularly outstanding

**Invasive potential:** aggressive, spreading plant

**Pest resistance:** long-term health usually not affected by pests

## **Use and Management**

This 4-foot-high shrub can be used as an unclipped hedge if there is enough space to accommodate its wide spreading habit. It is also useful as a tall ground cover. It is quite charming in a container or large hanging basket and is lovely when cascading over a wall. Branches droop several feet down the side of a container.

The Firecracker Plant is tolerant of different types of soils as long as they are well-drained. It does require full sun for best flowering and fullest growth. Plants tolerate extended drought once established. Unfortunately, plants can escape cultivation and have been found forming thickets on disturbed sites such as along roadsides and embankments.

Propagation of Firecracker Plant is by simple layers and cuttings.

### **Pests and Diseases**

*Russelia equisetiformis* is occasionally bothered by chewing insects, nematodes, and mites.