



Cooperative Extension Service  
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

## *Setcreasea pallida*<sup>1</sup>

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### Introduction

This sprawling evergreen groundcover produces deep purple foliage and stems when grown in full sun (Fig. 1). The rather brittle stems, a foot or more high, have a tendency to flop over, creating a trailing effect which lends itself nicely to informal planting beds, rock gardens, or containers. It also cascades nicely over retaining walls and does well in a hanging basket. The rather inconspicuous, three-petaled, pale pink, one-inch flowers are produced from the tips of stems and last only one morning.

### General Information

**Scientific name:** *Setcreasea pallida*

**Pronunciation:** SET-kree-zee-uh PAL-lid-duh

**Common name(s):** Purple Heart, Purple Queen

**Family:** *Commelinaceae*

**Plant type:** perennial; herbaceous

**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:** native to North America

**Uses:** container or above-ground planter; mass planting; naturalizing; hanging basket; suitable for growing indoors; cascading down a wall

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



Figure 1. Purple Heart.

### Description

**Height:** 1 to 1.5 feet

**Spread:** depends upon supporting structure

**Plant habit:** spreading

**Plant density:** open

**Growth rate:** moderate

**Texture:** medium

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**Foliage**

- Leaf arrangement:** alternate
- Leaf type:** simple
- Leaf margin:** ciliate
- Leaf shape:** lanceolate
- Leaf venation:** parallel
- Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen
- Leaf blade length:** 4 to 8 inches
- Leaf color:** purple or red
- Fall color:** no fall color change
- Fall characteristic:** not showy

**Flower**

- Flower color:** pink
- Flower characteristic:** year-round flowering

**Fruit**

- Fruit shape:** unknown
- Fruit length:** less than .5 inch
- Fruit cover:** dry or hard
- Fruit color:** unknown
- Fruit characteristic:** inconspicuous and not showy

**Trunk and Branches**

- Trunk/bark/branches:** not applicable
- Current year stem/twig color:** reddish
- Current year stem/twig thickness:** medium

**Culture**

- Light requirement:** plant grows in part shade/part sun
- Soil tolerances:** alkaline; clay; sand; acidic; loam
- Drought tolerance:** high
- Soil salt tolerances:** unknown
- Plant spacing:** 18 to 24 inches

**Other**

- Roots:** not applicable
- Winter interest:** no special winter interest
- Outstanding plant:** plant has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more
- Invasive potential:** aggressive, spreading plant

**Pest resistance:** no serious pests are normally seen on the plant

## **Use and Management**

Growing in full sun to partial shade, Purple Heart thrives in a wide variety of soils. In north Florida, frost may kill back the tops but, in warm weather in the spring, the plants recover quickly. Set plants on 12-inch centers for quick cover. Plants should be well-watered until established and then will only require attention during periods of extended drought.

Propagation is by stem cuttings which root easily.

## **Pests and Diseases**

No pests or diseases of major concern. Mites and chewing insects may occasionally cause injury.