Tropaeolum spp.¹

Edward F. Gilman²

Introduction

Nasturtium is an uncommon plant occasionally seen in the garden center. Plants display round leaves on long petioles emerging from a shortened stem. Bright, showy, red or orange flowers are held among the foliage and remain partially hidden from view. Foliage on some selections is a beautiful variegated green and white.

General Information

Scientific name: Tropaeolum spp.
Pronunciation: troe-PEE-oh-lum species
Common name(s): Watercress, Nasturtium
Family: Tropaeolaceae
Plant type: herbaceous
USDA hardiness zones: all zones (Fig. 1)
Planting month for zone 7: Jun; Jul
Planting month for zone 8: May; Jun
Planting month for zone 9: Mar; Apr; Oct; Nov
Planting month for zone 10 and 11: Nov; Dec; Jan; Feb; Mar
Origin: not native to North America
Uses: container or above-ground planter; mass planting; edging; border; culinary; attracts hummingbirds; hanging basket
Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant

Description

Height: 1 to 1.5 feet
Spread: 1 to 2 feet
Plant habit: round

Plant density: dense
Growth rate: moderate
Texture: coarse

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: most emerge from the soil, usually without a stem
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: undulate; lobed
Leaf shape: orbiculate
Leaf venation: palmate
Leaf type and persistence: not applicable
Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches
Leaf color: variegated
Fall color: not applicable
Fall characteristic: not applicable

Flower

Flower color: red; orange
Flower characteristic: summer flowering; flower season is longer in zones 9-11

Fruit

Fruit shape: no fruit
Fruit length: no fruit
Fruit cover: no fruit
Fruit color: not applicable
Fruit characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

¹ This document is Fact Sheet FPS-590, 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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**Trunk and Branches**

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

**Culture**

- **Light requirement**: plant grows in part shade/part sun
- **Soil tolerances**: occasionally wet; acidic; sand; loam; clay
- **Drought tolerance**: moderate
- **Soil salt tolerances**: unknown
- **Plant spacing**: 12 to 18 inches

**Other**

- **Roots**: not applicable
- **Winter interest**: not applicable
- **Outstanding plant**: not particularly outstanding
- **Invasive potential**: may self-seed each year
- **Pest resistance**: long-term health usually not affected by pests

**Use and Management**

The plant can be used along a walk or as a border at the edge of a landscape bed. The foliage stays fresh looking provided the plants receive some afternoon shade. They look best when provided with occasional irrigation when the weather gets dry.

Plants are useful in salads. Both flowers and foliage can be eaten and are quite nice. Surprise guests by picking bright flowers from the garden and include them in the salad.