Verbena bonariensis

Edward F. Gilman, Suzanne Shiffit

Introduction

Verbena bonariensis is an 18- to 36-inch-tall perennial with an upright habit and rigid branching stems (Fig. 1). The habit is unlike many of the other, more common verbenas. The 2- to 3-inch-long, light green leaves are narrow and sharply toothed. Purple, panicle-like flowers appear on this plant in the spring, summer, and fall. These beautiful flowers may be cut for flower arrangements and are long-lasting.

General Information

Scientific name: Verbena bonariensis
Pronunciation: ver-BEEN-nuh boe-nar-ree-EN-sis
Common name(s): Purple Verbena
Family: Verbenaceae
Plant type: ground cover
USDA hardiness zones: 7B through 10 (Fig. 2)
Planting month for zone 7: year round
Planting month for zone 8: year round
Planting month for zone 9: year round
Planting month for zone 10: year round
Origin: not native to North America
Uses: edging; ground cover; attracts butterflies; mass planting; naturalizing
Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant

Description

Height: 2 to 3 feet
Spread: 2 to 3 feet

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite

Figure 1. Purple Verbena.

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Verbena bonariensis -- Purple Verbena

Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Leaf type: simple  
Leaf margin: serrate  
Leaf shape: elliptic (oval)  
Leaf venation: pinnate  
Leaf type and persistence: deciduous  
Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches  
Leaf color: green  
Fall color: no fall color change  
Fall characteristic: not showy  

Trunk/bark/branches: not applicable  
Current year stem/twig color: green  
Current year stem/twig thickness: medium

Culture

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

Other

Roots: not applicable  
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

Purple Verbena may be used in the landscape as an edging or ground cover and is lovely when massed. It can make a nice show in the perennial border, adding a light, airy touch to the garden.

Purple Verbena should be grown in full sun on a well-drained soil. It is very heat tolerant and can endure periods of drought. Periodic pruning will enhance this perennial’s growth habit and blooming. Cut it back if it becomes too leggy and to promote another flower display.

Pests and Diseases

Verbena bonariensis is susceptible to powdery mildew and whiteflies.