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Amaranthus tricolor¹

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**Introduction**

This rapidly-growing annual is noted for its brilliantly-colored foliage, variegated in shades of red, green, or yellow (Fig. 1). Joseph’s Coat will reach 1 to 4 feet in height and the beautiful leaves are 3 to 6 inches long and 2 to 4 inches wide. Joseph’s Coat is ideal for edgings, borders, or mass plantings, where its vivid coloration will attract attention. It is one of the only annuals striking enough to be planted as a specimen.

**General Information**

Scientific name: *Amaranthus tricolor*

Pronunciation: am-uh-RANTH-us TRY-kull-lur

Common name(s): Joseph’s Coat Amaranth, Fountain Plant, Love-Lies-Bleeding

Family: *Amaranthaceae*

Plant type: annual

USDA hardiness zones: all zones (Fig. 2)

Planting month for zone 7: Jun

Planting month for zone 8: May

Planting month for zone 9: Apr

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: Dec; Jan; Feb

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: container or above-ground planter; specimen; border; accent

Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant

**Description**

Height: 1 to 4 feet

**Figure 1. Joseph’s Coat Amaranth.**

**Spread:** 1 to 2 feet

**Plant habit:** upright

**Plant density:** moderate

**Growth rate:** fast

**Texture:** coarse

**Foliage**
Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Leaf arrangement: alternate
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: undulate
Leaf shape: ovate
Leaf venation: pinnate
Leaf type and persistence: not applicable
Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches
Leaf color: yellow; purple or red; variegated
Fall color: not applicable
Fall characteristic: not applicable

Flower

Flower color: red
Flower characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: no fruit
Fruit length: no fruit
Fruit cover: no fruit
Fruit color: not applicable
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: very thick

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in full sun
Soil tolerances: clay; sand; acidic; loam;
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: not known to be invasive
Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests
Use and Management

Plants should be placed in full sun for best leaf color but can tolerate partial shade in the hottest locations. Any well-drained soil is fine and plants are quite drought-tolerant. Joseph’s Coat will perform best where they do not receive too much fertilizer since the leaves will lose their vibrant coloring when grown in very rich soils. Plants usually need staking to hold them upright.

Cultivars include ‘Early Splendor’, ‘Flaming Fountain’, and ‘Molten Fire’, ‘Perfecta’, ‘Splendens’, ‘Tricolor’ having various brilliant shades of yellow to red foliage. ‘Green Thumb’ and ‘Pigmy Touch’ are more compact and may not need staking.

A related plant called *A. hybridus* are considered useful for reducing tissue swelling and have a cleansing effect. It has also been used for diarrhea, ulcers and hemmorraging.

Propagation is by seed which germinates readily.

**Pests and Diseases**

None of major concern.