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Acalypha herzogiana: Dwarf Chenille Plant[1]

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https://ffl.ifas.ufl.edu/

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This document is part of a series originally written by Edward F. Gilman.

Introduction

Dwarf chenille plant is a perennial groundcover that reaches a maximum height of 6 inches (Figure 1). This plant is a fine-textured relative of the more commonly used chenille plant, *Acalypha hispida*, which is an upright shrub. In the full sun, this plant forms a thick canopy of tiny, serrated leaves 3/4 inches long by 1/2 inches wide (Figure 2). Bright red, fuzzy flowers stand upright above the foliage (Figure 3).



Figure 1. Full form—*Acalypha herzogiana*: dwarf chenille plant.
Credit: Edward F. Gilman, UF/IFAS



Figure 2. Leaf—*Acalypha herzogiana*: dwarf chenille plant.
Credit: Edward F. Gilman, UF/IFAS



Figure 3. Flower—*Acalypha herzogiana*: dwarf chenille plant.
Credit: Edward F. Gilman, UF/IFAS

General Information

Scientific name: *Acalypha herzogiana*

Previous name(s): *Acalypha pendula* (misapplied)

Pronunciation: ack-uh-LIFE-uh her-zog-ee-AH-nah

Common name(s): dwarf chenille plant, strawberry firetails, dwarf cat's tail

Family: *Euphorbiaceae*

Plant type: groundcover

USDA hardiness zones: 9B through 11B (Figures 4 and 5)

USDA Hardiness Zones 9B-11A

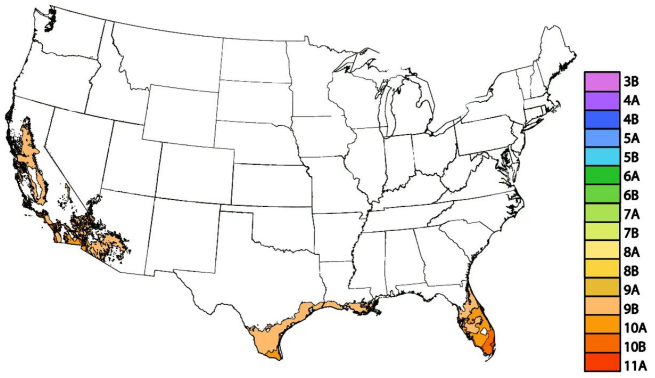


Figure 4. Shaded area represents potential planting zone—USDA Hardiness Zones 9B–11A; 11B within USDA planting zone but not pictured on map.
Credit: This map is based on the 2023 USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map. Visit https://planthardiness.ars.usda.gov/ for specific zone information.

USDA Hardiness Zones 9B-11A

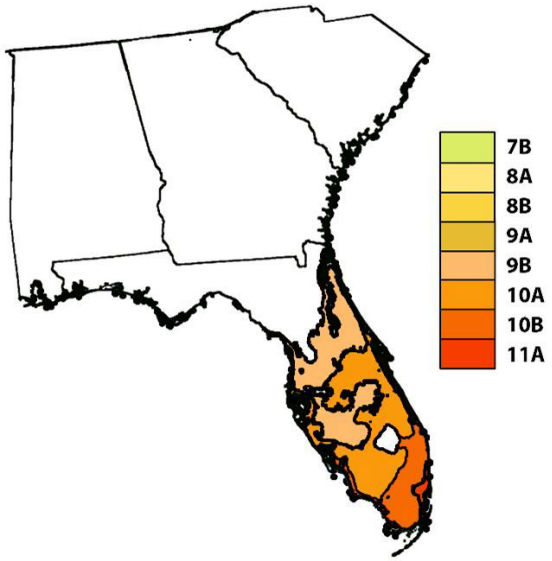


Figure 5. Shaded area represents potential planting zone in the SE Region—USDA Hardiness Zones 9B–11A; 11B within planting zone but not pictured on map.
Credit: This map is based on the 2023 USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map. Visit https://planthardiness.ars.usda.gov/ for specific zone information.

Planting month for zone 9B: year-round

Planting month for zones 10 and 11: year-round

Origin: not native to North America

Invasive potential: not known to be invasive

Uses: hanging basket; groundcover; cascading down a wall

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

Description

Height: up to 6 inches

Spread: depends upon supporting structure

Plant habit: spreading

Plant density: dense

Growth rate: slow

Texture: fine

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: serrate

Leaf shape: ovate

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen

Leaf blade length: less than 2 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: unknown

Fruit length: unknown

Fruit cover: unknown

Fruit color: unknown

Fruit characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: not applicable

Current year stem/twig color: green

Current year stem/twig thickness: thin

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in partial shade

Soil tolerances: acidic; slightly alkaline; sand; loam

Drought tolerance: moderate

Soil salt tolerance: unknown

Plant spacing: 18 to 24 inches

Other

Roots: not applicable

Winter interest: no special winter interest

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

Use and Management

Dwarf chenille plant is well suited for a hanging basket or will have a cascading effect when planted close to the edge of a wall. This plant makes a good groundcover provided it is planted in a low traffic location, as foot traffic will damage this plant. Its small stature and slow growth make it a nice addition to a rock garden or other small-scale landscape design.

Dwarf chenille plants thrive in partial shade. This plant performs well in many types of well-drained soils with little care other than occasional irrigation needed to maintain the plant once it is established.

Design Considerations

The short red upright flowers of the dwarf chenille plant are a striking feature that can be used to bring color to a groundcover. Red shows best in full or part sun when paired with other small shrubs or groundcovers with white and pink flowers to make the red look more intense. Groundcovers with larger dark green, glossy leaves would also contrast well with the leaves of the dwarf chenille plant. Background plants could include purple and white flowers, and fine or medium textures such as grasses with narrow strap blades in a clumping form or tall spiky forms with narrow leaves.

Pests and Diseases

Scales, mites, whitefly, and aphids may be troublesome pests in some landscapes, especially when plants are grown in partial shade. No diseases of major concern.

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