

# *Acalypha herzogiana*: Dwarf Chenille Plant<sup>1</sup>

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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

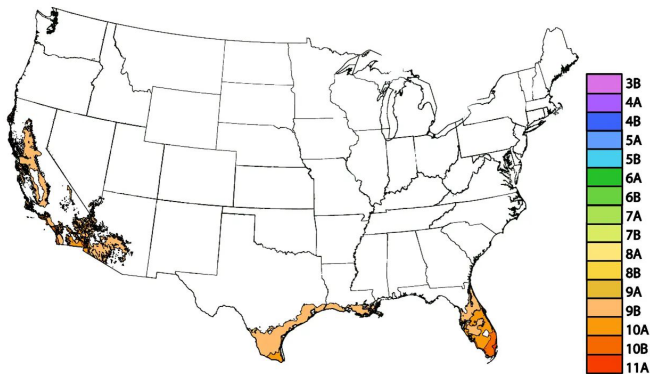


Figure 4. Shaded area represents potential planting zone—USDA Hardiness Zones 9B–11A; 11B within USDA planting zone but not pictured on map. Credit: This map is based on the 2023 USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map. Visit <https://planthardiness.ars.usda.gov/> for specific zone information.

USDA Hardiness Zones 9B-11A

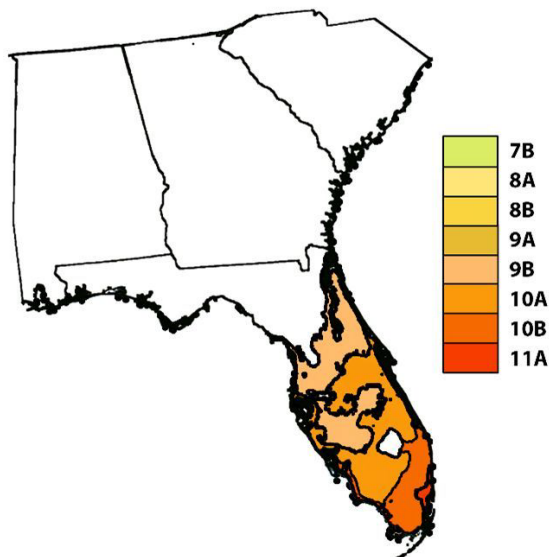


Figure 5. Shaded area represents potential planting zone in the SE Region—USDA Hardiness Zones 9B–11A; 11B within planting zone but not pictured on map. Credit: This map is based on the 2023 USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map. Visit <https://planthardiness.ars.usda.gov/> for specific zone information.

**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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