

Amaranthus tricolor: Joseph's Coat Amaranth, Fountain Plant¹

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

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

Introduction

Joseph's coat amaranth is a rapidly growing annual with an upright growth habit, reaching a height of 4 feet and spread of 2 feet (Figure 1). This plant is noted for its brilliantly colored foliage, which is variegated in shades of red, green, or yellow (Figure 2). The beautiful leaves have a length and width of 2 to 4 inches. Joseph's coat is ideal for edgings, borders, or mass plantings, where its vivid coloration will attract attention (Figure 3). Several cultivars are available in a variety of colors and growth dimensions.



Figure 2. Leaf—*Amaranthus tricolor*: Joseph's coat amaranth.

Credit: Wirestock via Adobe Stock



Figure 1. Full form—*Amaranthus tricolor*: Joseph's coat amaranth.

Credit: Tom Wichman, UF/IFAS



Figure 3. Full form—*Amaranthus tricolor*: Joseph's coat amaranth full form mass planting.

Credit: Tom Wichman, UF/IFAS

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, three-colored Amaranth

Family: *Amaranthaceae*

Plant type: annual

USDA hardiness zones: all zones (Figures 4 and 5)

USDA Hardiness Zones 3B-11A

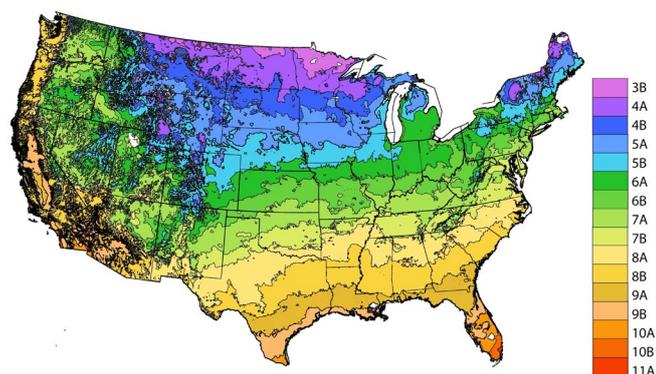


Figure 4. Shaded area represents potential planting zone—USDA Hardiness Zones 3B-11A; 11B within planting zone but not pictured on map.

Credit: This map is based on the 2023 USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map.

Visit <https://planthardiness.ars.usda.gov/> for specific zone information.

USDA Hardiness Zones 7B-11A

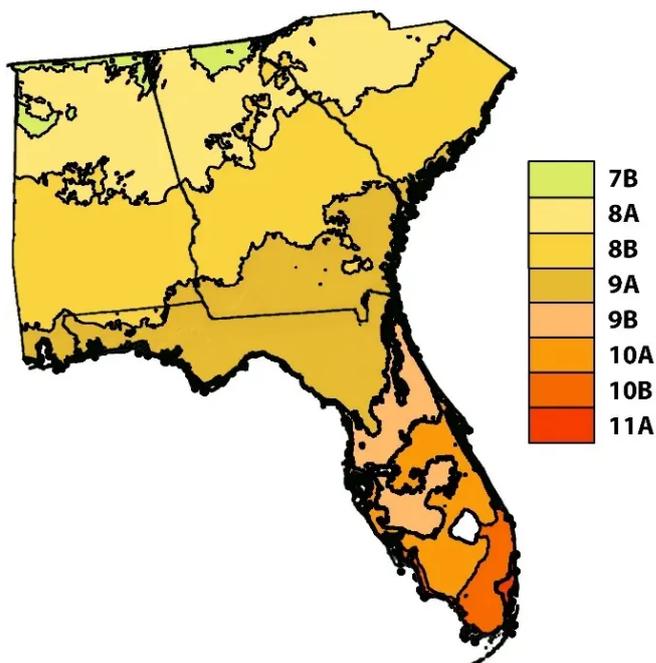


Figure 5. Shaded area represents potential planting zone in the SE region—USDA Hardiness Zones 7B-11A; 11B within planting zone but not pictured on map.

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 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

Spread: 1 to 2 feet

Plant habit: upright

Plant density: moderate

Growth rate: fast

Texture: coarse

Foliage

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; pink; purple; red; green; variegated; dependent upon cultivar selection

Fall color: not applicable

Fall characteristic: not applicable

Flower

Flower color: red

Flower characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: capsule

Fruit length: less than 1 inch

Fruit cover: dry or hard

Fruit color: brown

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; plant grows in partial shade

Soil tolerances: acidic; clay; sand; loam

Drought tolerance: moderate

Soil salt tolerance: unknown

Plant spacing: 12 to 18 inches

Other

Roots: not applicable

Winter interest: not applicable

Invasive potential: not known to be invasive

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

Use and Management

Joseph's coat amaranth should be located in full sun for the most vibrant leaf coloration, but can tolerate partial shade in the southern regions of its planting zones. This plant performs well in any soil type and is moderately drought tolerant. Joseph's coat plants perform best where it does not receive too much fertilizer, as the leaves will lose their vibrant coloring when grown in very rich soils. Plants usually need staking to hold them upright.

The bright foliage makes Amaranth a showy addition to the landscape. It may be used as a specimen or accent in the landscape, in containers, or as a border. This warm season annual adds color to the landscape, and care should be taken into how to blend the colors with the other plant species present. This plant will die back in the winter and will need to be replanted the following year if desired.

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

Propagation is by seed, which germinates readily.

Design Considerations

When choosing companion plants for Joseph's coat amaranth, consider its bold foliage and upright growth habit. Plants with contrasting textures and colors work well. For example, pairing it with low growing, spreading groundcovers or ornamental grasses can create an attractive visual contrast. Using evergreen shrubs as a backdrop is also highly effective; their deep green foliage and year-round presence provide a stable canvas that makes the Amaranth's brilliant colors and bold texture stand out. In a mixed border, consider combining it with other flowering plants like marigolds or zinnias. Their bright blooms complement the colorful foliage of Joseph's coat amaranth, creating an eye-catching display.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases of major concern.

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