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Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ PROGRAM

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Anthurium spp.: Tailflower, Flamingo Flower, Anthurium[1]

Keighly Graves, Wendy Wilber, Tom Wichman, Claire Lewis, Gail Hansen, and Ryan Klein[2]

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

Introduction

Anthurium is a genus of tropical plants native to regions of Latin America and the Caribbean. These plants are either epiphytic or terrestrial in their native habitat. There are over 1,300 species of Anthurium, with varying leaf shapes and growth habits. Anthurium is the largest genus in the Aroid, or *Araceae*, family. Typically, the most well-known Anthurium species contain a large, brightly colored spathe, which surrounds the flower structure. There are numerous species with various flower structures, including those with less prominent flower structures, but showy foliage.

Anthurium is an herbaceous perennial plant with an upright growth habit, reaching a height and spread of 3 feet (Figure 1). This plant has shiny dark green, oblong, cordate (heart-shaped) evergreen leaves (Figure 2). The foliage can span 8 to 12 inches long and may vary in shape depending upon species. The inflorescence is composed of the spathe (which is a modified leaf, called a bract) that is generally the showy colorful part of the floral structure, and the spadix (pale yellow tail-like cluster of flowers in the center of the spathe). This flower structure is common in the Aroid (*Araceae*) plant family (Figure 3). The spathe may be red, rose, pink, white, green, orange or other colors depending on the species. Although rarely produced, the fruit is a showy cluster of red berries (Figure 4).

Anthurium species that produce showy flowers will bloom 4 to 6 times during the year, with each flower lasting about six weeks. This plant lends the landscape a tropical feel, and is well suited as a specimen or accent, in a container or above-ground planter, as a border or edging in the landscape, as a groundcover in mass plantings, or as a houseplant. Anthurium flowers last several weeks as cut flowers in arrangements. This plant is epiphytic or grows upon the surface of other plants or trees, in its natural habitat, and is known for its air purifying qualities. Anthurium is a tropical plant and requires frost protection or should be used as a houseplant in northern areas.



Figure 1. Full form—*Anthurium andraeanum* spp.: Anthurium.
Credit: © kdiebold, some rights reserved (CC-BY-NC) via iNaturalist



Figure 2. Leaf—*Anthurium* spp.: Anthurium foliage.
Credit: Keighly Graves, UF/IFAS



Figure 3. Flower—*Anthurium andraeanum* spp.: tailflower, flamingo flower.
Credit: Keighly Graves, UF/IFAS



Figure 4. Fruit—*Anthurium gracile*: tailflower, flamingo flower.
Credit: Ruth P. Peterkin via Adobe Stock

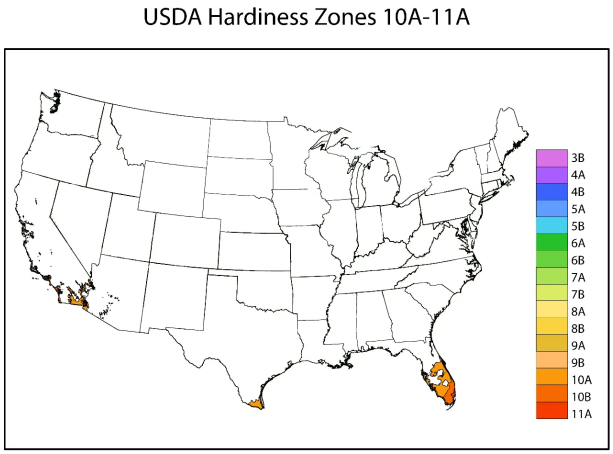


Figure 5. Shaded area represents potential planting zone—USDA Hardiness Zones 10A–11A; 11B within planting zone but not pictured on map.
Credit: This map is based on the 2023 USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map. Visit https://planthardiness.ars.usda.gov/ for specific zone information.

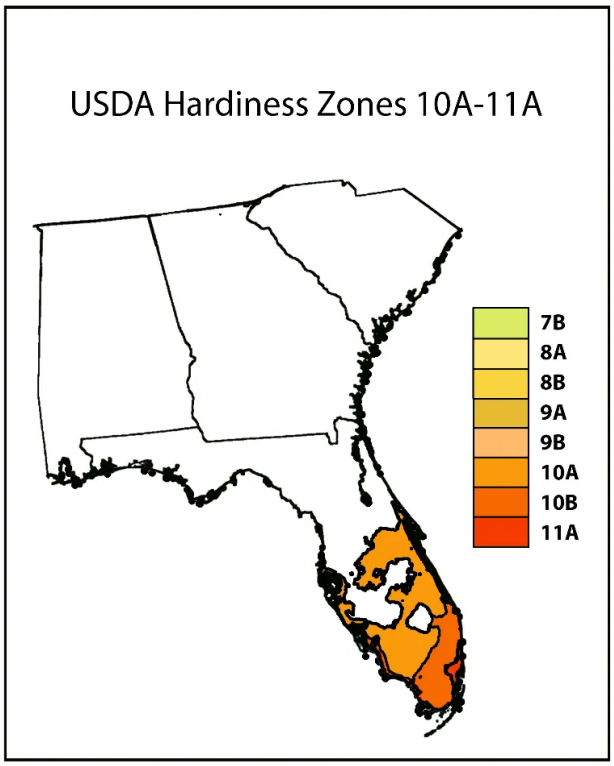


Figure 6. Shaded area represents potential planting zone in the SE Region—USDA Hardiness Zones 10A–11A; 11B included with planting zone but not pictured on map.
Credit: This map is based on the 2023 USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map.
Visit https://planthardiness.ars.usda.gov/ for specific zone information.

General Information

Scientific name: *Anthurium* spp.

Pronunciation: an-THUR-ee-um species

Common name(s): tailflower, flamingo flower, Anthurium, painter's palate

Family: *Araceae*

Plant type: perennial; herbaceous

USDA hardiness zones: 10A through 11B; dependent upon species (Figures 5 and 6)

Planting month for zones 10 and 11: year-round

Origin: not native to North America

Invasive potential: not known to be invasive

Uses: specimen; container or above-ground planter; border; ground cover; cut flowers; accent; edging; suitable for growing indoors

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

Description

Height: 2 to 3 feet; dependent upon species

Spread: 2 to 3 feet; dependent upon species

Plant habit: upright

Plant density: open

Growth rate: slow

Texture: coarse

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: revolute

Leaf shape: cordate (heart-shaped); a few species have strapped leaves

Leaf venation: brochidodromous; pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen

Leaf blade length: 8 to 12 inches; dependent upon species

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: composed of spathe/bracts, which may be red, pink, salmon, orange, white, cream, variegated, dependent upon cultivar; spadix is pale yellow

Flower characteristic: year-round flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: elongated; globose

Fruit length: less than 1 inch

Fruit cover: fleshy

Fruit color: red

Fruit characteristic: fruits rarely produced; red berry-like clusters produced on a stalk; showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: usually with one stem/trunk

Current year stem/twig color: not applicable

Current year stem/twig thickness: not applicable

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in the shade; plant grows in partial shade

Soil tolerances: acidic; sand; loam

Drought tolerance: moderate

Soil salt tolerance: poor

Plant spacing: 18 to 24 inches

Other

Roots: usually not a problem

Winter interest: no special winter interest

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

Toxicity: this species exhibits low toxicity characteristics; all parts of the plant can cause contact dermatitis; gastroenteric irritant; toxic principle includes calcium oxalate crystals

Use and Management

Anthurium plants should be located in shaded areas with humidity above 50%. If the relative humidity drops below this level, the leaves lose their shiny texture and may potentially die off. These plants also require soil that is high in organic matter. For interior use, keep potted plants on trays of moist gravel or spray several times per day with water and protect from drafts. Single plants are best used in small gardens. In larger landscapes, a mass of many plants together looks best when planted on two- to three-foot centers.

Propagation is by cuttings or seed.

Design Considerations

From a design perspective, Anthurium functions as a structural accent and a source of exotic color. Its bold, glossy, heart-shaped leaves provide a strong textural statement that contrasts beautifully with finer-textured plants. Pair with plants that are softer with small foliage and low-growing mounding or spreading forms, or with other large-leaf tropicals with coarse texture such as Philodendrons. Yellow-green or variegated green foliage in the companion plants will highlight the deep green of the leaves. When pairing with other flowering plants, use white and bright yellows to contrast the deep green and highlight the warm reds of the flower bracts and the yellow spadix.

Pest and Diseases

Potential pests include mites, scales, mealy bugs, and nematodes. No diseases are of major concern.

Table 1. Anthurium species and their traits.

Species	Image	Size	Traits
Anthurium andraeanum		12"–18" H; 9"–12" W	Known as the flamingo flower. A very popular Anthurium species that is used in arrangements or as a houseplant. Bracts are showy and may be white, pink, red, orange.
Anthurium hookeri		24"–36" H; 12"–24" W	Known as the bird's nest Anthurium. This species is notable for its rosette of showy leaves. Flowers are produced, but less notable than other Anthurium species.
Anthurium schlechtendaii		36" H; 36" W	This species is naturally epiphytic. The evergreen leaves can reach 2 feet in width by 6 feet in length. The fruit is very showy on this species.
Anthurium scherzerianum		12"–18" H; 12"–18" W	This species is commonly known as pigtail Anthurium as the spadix has a spiral structure.
Anthurium crystallinum		Up to 36" H; 24"–36" W	This species is known as the crystal Anthurium. It has attractive variegation and velvety foliage.

Credits: *Anthurium andraeanum*: AlysC via Adobe Stock; *Anthurium hookeri*: Windi Holly via Adobe Stock; *Anthurium schlechtendaii*: photo courtesy of Grand LUX Flowers & Trees; *Anthurium scherzerianum*: Heron/Wirestock Creators via Adobe Stock; *Anthurium crystallinum*: lacastudio via Adobe Stock

[1] This document is FPS-42, one of a series of the Department of Environmental Horticulture, UF/IFAS Extension. Original publication date October 1999. Revised August 2018 and December 2025. Visit the Ask IFAS website at https://ask.ifas.ufl.edu/ for the currently supported version of this publication. *To learn more about creating and maintaining attractive landscapes that protect Florida's water and natural resources, visit ffl.ifas.ufl.edu/*.

[2] Keighly Graves, horticultural science specialist, Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Program; Wendy Wilber, statewide Master Gardener Program coordinator and Extension agent IV; Tom Wichman, Extension program manager, Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Program, UF/IFAS Center for Land Use Efficiency; Claire Lewis, state specialized agent II and director Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Program, UF/IFAS Center for Land Use Efficiency; Gail Hansen, professor, sustainable landscape design, Department of Horticultural Sciences; Ryan Klein, assistant professor, arboriculture, School of Forest, Fisheries, and Geomatics Sciences; UF/IFAS Extension, Gainesville, FL 32611.

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