

## *Mesembryanthemum cordifolium*: Baby Sun Rose, Heartleaf Iceplant<sup>1</sup>

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

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

### Introduction

Baby sun rose is a perennial groundcover with a prostrate growth habit. This plant may reach a height of 3 to 4 inches and spreads in the landscape, hugging the ground forming a tight, almost clipped appearance (Figure 1). This plant has 1-inch-long dark green glossy foliage (Figure 2) and bright red, pink, or purple aster-like flowers that bloom nearly year-round (Figure 3). This plant is well suited for use in a hanging basket, cascading down a wall, as a groundcover, or in a mass planting.



Figure 1. Full form—*Mesembryanthemum cordifolium*: baby sun rose.

Credit: © harrylurling, some rights reserved (CC-BY-ND) via iNaturalist



Figure 2. Leaf—*Mesembryanthemum cordifolium*: baby sun rose.

Credit: Amalia Gruber via Adobe Stock

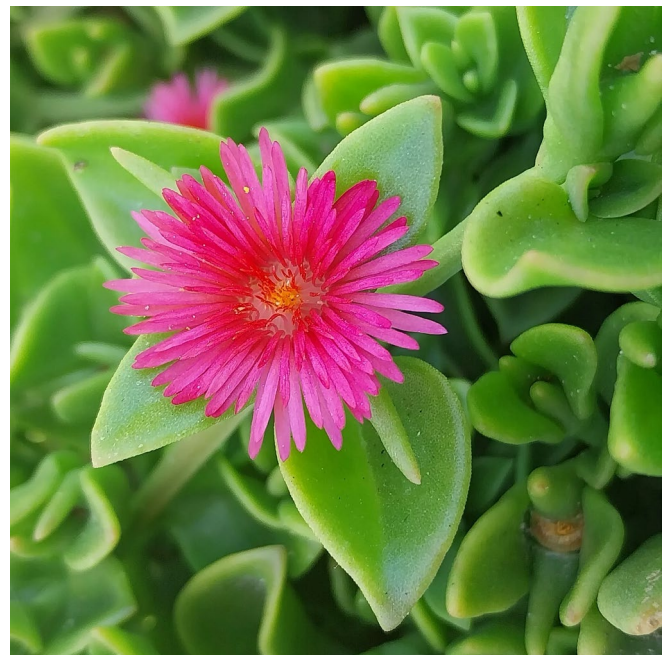


Figure 3. Flower—*Mesembryanthemum cordifolium*: baby sun rose.

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## General Information

**Scientific name:** *Mesembryanthemum cordifolium*

**Previous name(s):** *Aptenia cordifolia*

**Pronunciation:** mes-em-bry-ANT-thee-mum cor-di-FULL-e-um

**Common name(s):** baby sun rose, heartleaf iceplant

**Family:** *Aizoaceae*

**Plant type:** groundcover

**USDA hardiness zones:** 10A through 11B (Figures 4 and 5)

USDA Hardiness Zones 10A-11A

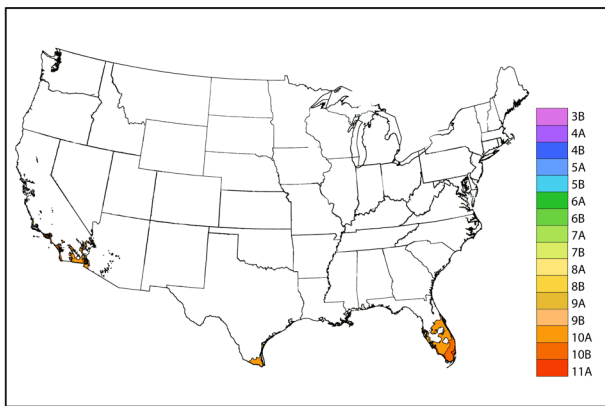


Figure 4. Shaded area represents potential planting zone—USDA Hardiness Zones 10A–11A; 11B within planting zone but not pictured on map.

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

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

USDA Hardiness Zones 10A-11A

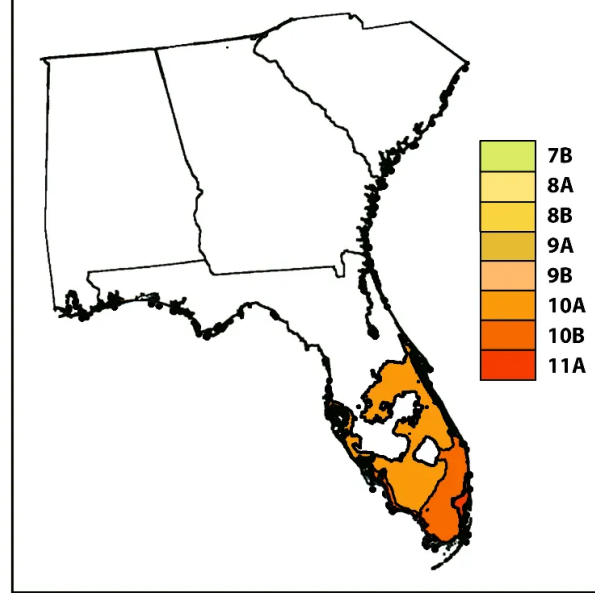


Figure 5. Shaded area represents potential planting zone in the SE Region—USDA Hardiness Zones 10A–11A; 11B within planting zone but not pictured on map.

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

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

**Planting month for zones 10 and 11:** year-round

**Origin:** native to Africa

**Invasive potential:** Not considered a problem species at this time

**Uses:** hanging basket; cascading down a wall; groundcover; mass planting; bedding plant; annual; rock garden

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

## Description

**Height:** up to 4 inches

**Spread:** 1 to 2 feet

**Plant habit:** prostrate (flat)

**Plant density:** dense

**Growth rate:** slow

**Texture:** fine

## Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** opposite/subopposite

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** entire

**Leaf shape:** ovate

**Leaf venation:** none, or difficult to see

**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; pink; purple

**Flower characteristic:** spring-flowering; summer-flowering; fall-flowering; nyctinastic (flowers open during the day and close at night)

## Fruit

**Fruit shape:** round; 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:** green

**Current year stem/twig thickness:** medium

## Culture

**Light requirement:** plant grows in full sun

**Soil tolerances:** acidic; slightly alkaline; sand; loam

**Drought tolerance:** high

**Soil salt tolerances:** good

**Plant spacing:** 24 to 36 inches

## Other

**Roots:** not applicable

**Winter interest:** evergreen foliage

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

## Use and Management

Baby sun rose should be planted in full sun, in well-drained soil to prevent root rot. After watering plants in containers, be sure to allow the soil to become fairly dry before watering again. Established landscape plants should require little if any irrigation in most years. A light fertilization two or three times during the year should be all the plant needs to maintain a good appearance.

This plant is best suited for a coastal landscape where wind and sandy soil keep the soil dry. It may be grown in a hanging basket in a well-drained medium or as a groundcover in a small landscape or rock garden.

## Design Considerations

The low-growing habit and small leaves of the baby sun rose cover the ground in a thick, lush layer of green, perfect for filling in among other plants in the landscape. Simple forms and light or medium green foliage of companion plants will highlight the dark green glossy foliage of the sun rose. Clumping plants with upright form and larger textured leaves or strap-blade leaves would also contrast well with the matting, low-growing form. Locate it in front of an upright, grass or grass-like plant such as one of the ornamental grasses, African iris, or spartina to make a stunning, contrasting combination.

The mass of green works well with different flower colors, but bright and light colors will show the best next to the dark green foliage. Small or medium-size flowers with simple forms will contrast with the small dark flowers without adding too much detail.

## Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases of major concern. Overwatering can cause root rot, leading to poor plant growth, chlorosis, and plant death.

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