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Bauhinia galpinii: Red Bauhinia, Red Orchid Bush[1]

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This Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ publication is part of a series originally written by Edward F. Gilman.
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Introduction

Red bauhinia is a dense, semi-climbing evergreen with a spreading habit of up to 15 feet, and a height dependent upon the supporting structure (Figure 1). The evergreen leaves are oblong and deeply lobed (Figure 2). The showy flowers of this sprawling plant are orchid-like in appearance, brick-red in color, and born in racemes (Figure 3). The 1 1/2-inch-wide flowers of red bauhinia occur in the spring through fall. The fruits are 5-inch-long pods that appear in the late summer, persist on the plant, and may be a litter problem in the landscape (Figure 4). Red bauhinia is a hardy plant, being both drought and salt tolerant. This plant may be utilized as a specimen, espalier, in a hanging basket, as a border in a landscape bed, or planted en masse as a groundcover.



Figure 1. Full form—*Bauhinia galpinii*: red bauhinia. Credit: © Manuel Laudien, some rights reserved (CCBY-NC) via iNaturalist



Figure 2. Leaf—*Bauhinia galpinii*: Red bauhinia. Credit: © Africa Gomez, some rights reserved (CCBY-NC) via iNaturalist



Figure 3. Flower—*Bauhinia galpinii*: Red bauhinia. Credit: © inspirationalnature, some rights reserved (CCBY-NC) via iNaturalist

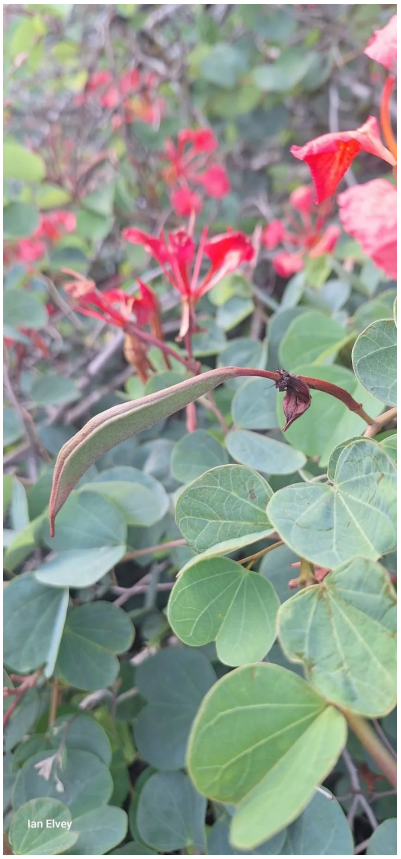


Figure 4. Flower—*Bauhinia galpinii*: Red bauhinia.
Credit: © ianelvey, some rights reserved (CCBY-NC) via iNaturalist

General Information

Scientific name: *Bauhinia galpinii*

Previous scientific name(s): *Bauhinia punctata* (synonym)

Pronunciation: baw-HIN-ee-uh gal-pin-E

Common name(s): Red bauhinia; nasturtium bauhinia; pride of the cape; red orchid bush

Family: *Fabaceae*

Plant type: shrub; vine

USDA hardiness zones: 9B through 11B (Figures 5 and 6)

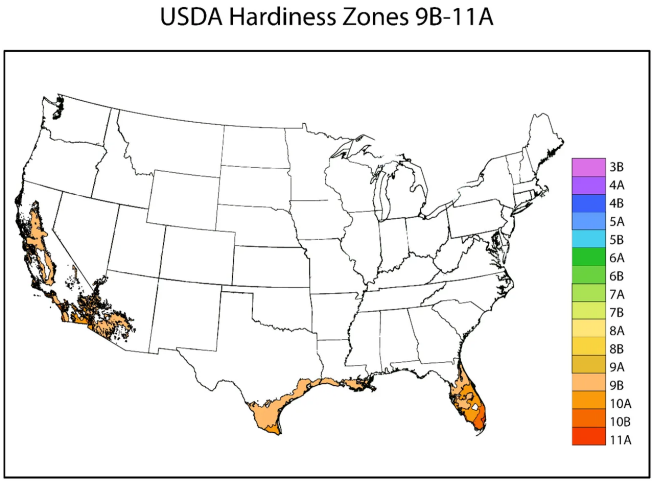


Figure 5. Shaded area represents potential planting zone—USDA Hardiness Zones 9B–11A; 11B within planting zone but not pictured on map.
Credit: This map is based on the 2023 USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map. Visit https://planthardiness.ars.usda.gov/ for specific zone information.

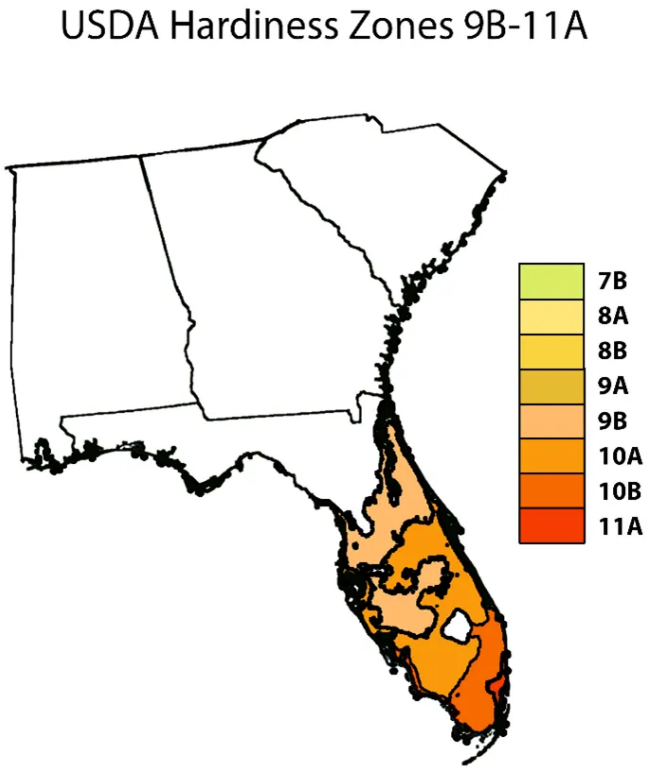


Figure 6. Shaded area represents potential planting zone in the SE Region—USDA Hardiness Zones 9B–11A; 11B within planting zone but not pictured on map.
Credit: This map is based on the 2023 USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map. Visit https://planthardiness.ars.usda.gov/ for specific zone information.

Planting month for zone 9: year-round

Planting month for zones 10 and 11: year-round

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: specimen; espalier; container; hanging basket; border; groundcover

Availability: grown in small quantities by a small number of nurseries

Description

Height: depends upon supporting structure

Spread: 6 to 15 feet

Plant habit: spreading

Plant density: dense

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: lobed

Leaf shape: oblong

Leaf venation: palmate

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen

Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: red

Flower characteristic: spring-flowering; summer-flowering; fall-flowering; showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: pod or pod-like

Fruit length: 3 to 6 inches

Fruit cover: dry or hard

Fruit color: brown

Fruit characteristic: pods persist on the plant and may be messy in the landscape

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: typically multi-trunked or clumping stems; not particularly showy

Current year stem/twig color: brown

Current year stem/twig thickness: medium

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in full sun

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

Drought tolerance: high

Soil salt tolerances: moderate

Plant spacing: 36 to 60 inches

Other

Roots: usually not a problem

Winter interest: evergreen foliage adds winter interest

Pest resistance: no serious pests are normally seen on the plant

Use and Management

Red bauhinia thrives when planted in full sun. It is highly drought tolerant and has moderate salt tolerance. This plant is adaptable to a variety of soil conditions, but grows best on a well-drained, sandy loam soil. It often suffers from a deficiency of micronutrients in soil with a pH above 7. This plant requires little maintenance once it is established but may need early spring pruning or shaping for growth control.

Red bauhinia is nice in the landscape as an espalier, specimen, border, groundcover, and container plant. It climbs a fence nicely, producing most of the flowers near the top. It is a bit asymmetrical, perhaps even unkempt looking, making it best suited for large-scale landscape planting.

Red bauhinia is propagated by seeds or cuttings.

Design Considerations

With its dramatic, sprawling habit and vivid reddish-orange blooms, red bauhinia makes an exceptional specimen plant. Its sprawling form is highly effective when allowed to spill over banks and retaining walls, or it can be trained as a striking espalier. For a high-impact landscape design, contrast its features with companion plants of differing color and form. The red flowers create a stunning visual when paired with the cool blues and purples of Agapanthus or Salvia, while its arching branches provide a contrast to the fine, upright blades of ornamental grasses or the bold, architectural shapes of Yuccas and Agaves. As a guiding principle, select companions that thrive in full sun and share similar low-to-moderate water needs once established.

Pests and Diseases

Pest issues include foliar damage from chewing insects. No diseases of major concern.

[1] This document is FPS61, one of a series of the Department of Environmental Horticulture, UF/IFAS Extension. Original publication date October 1999. Revised July 2022 and December 2025. Visit the Ask IFAS website at https://ask.ifas.ufl.edu/ for the currently supported version of this publication.

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