

Combretum fruticosum: Orange Flame Vine¹

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This *Florida-Friendly Landscaping™* publication is part of a document series originally written by Edward F. Gilman. Visit <https://FloridaFriendlyLandscaping.com> to learn more about creating and maintaining attractive landscapes that protect Florida's water resources and environment.

Introduction

Orange flame vine is a tropical evergreen vine with a spreading growth habit. This plant reaches a spread of 10 to 20 feet, and height depends upon supporting structure (Figure 1). The evergreen leaves are 4 to 8-inches long, elliptic, and glossy (Figure 2). Delicate orange and yellow brush-like flowers are borne in the axils of the opposite, simple leaves (Figure 3). This plant has a peak bloom season from late summer through fall. These showy clusters of flowers attract pollinators and hummingbirds. These flowers develop into clusters of red, four-winged seed pods (Figure 4). With its showy flowers and seed pods, this plant makes an excellent specimen, may be used to veil a trellis, or trained as an espalier or standard.



Figure 1. Full form—*Combretum fruticosum*: orange flame vine.
Credit: © pedro open, some rights reserved (CC BY-NC) via iNaturalist



Figure 2. Leaf—*Combretum fruticosum*: orange flame vine.
Credit: © Maël Dewynter, some rights reserved (CC BY-NC) via iNaturalist



Figure 3. Flower—*Combretum fruticosum*: orange flame vine.
Credit: © Guillermo Andreo, some rights reserved (CC BY-NC) via iNaturalist



Figure 4. Fruit—*Combretum fruticosum*: orange flame vine.
Credit: © Francisco González Táboas, some rights reserved (CC BY-NC) via iNaturalist

General Information

Scientific name: *Combretum fruticosum*

Pronunciation: kom-BREE-tum froo-tick-KOE-sum

Common name(s): orange flame vine

Family: *Combretaceae*

Plant type: vine

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

USDA Hardiness Zones 9B-11A

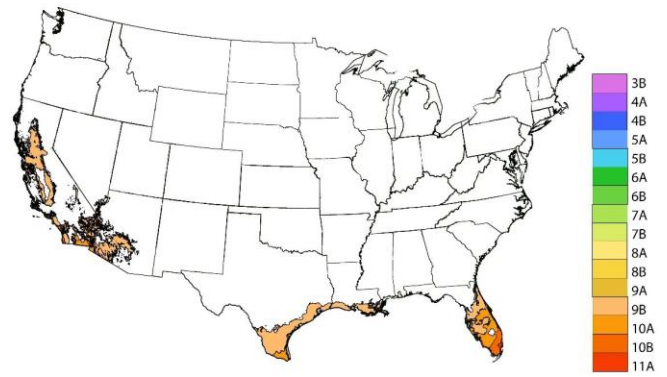


Figure 5. Shaded area represents potential planting zone—USDA Hardiness Zones 9B to 11A; 11B within planting zone but not pictured on map.

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 9B-11A

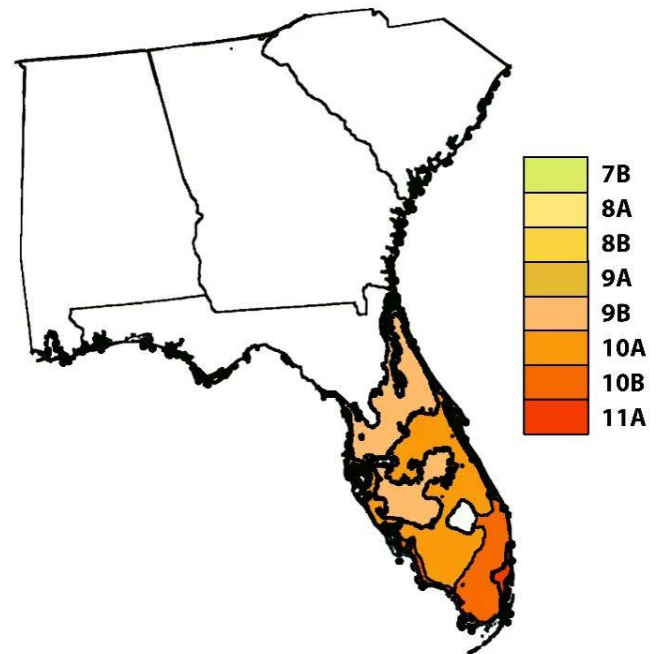


Figure 6. Shaded area represents potential planting zone in the SE Region—USDA Hardiness Zones 9B to 11A; 11B within planting zone but not pictured on map.

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

Invasive potential: not known to be invasive

Uses: trained as a standard; espalier; specimen; veils a trellis

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

Description

Height: depends upon supporting structure

Spread: 10 to 20 feet

Plant habit: spreading; round

Plant density: moderate

Growth rate: fast

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: elliptic (oval)

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen

Leaf blade length: 4 to 8 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: orange

Flower characteristic: summer flowering; fall flowering; showy (brush-like flowers)

Fruit

Fruit type: samara-like

Fruit shape: elliptic

Fruit length: less than 1 inch

Fruit cover: dry or hard

Fruit color: red

Fruit : showy

Trunk and Branches

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

Current year stem/twig color: reddish

Current year stem/twig thickness: thin

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in full sun

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

Drought tolerance: moderate

Soil salt tolerances: poor

Plant spacing: 36 to 60 inches

Other

Roots: usually not a problem

Winter interest: evergreen foliage

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

Use and Management

Orange flame vine should be planted in full sun for optimal flower production. This plant is adaptable to various soil conditions given that soil is well drained; however, it will benefit from incorporation of organic matter. Flowers are produced in the leaf axils of the new growth. If pruning is needed, it should occur after flowering has finished. Supply the plant with regular irrigation during dry weather to maintain good growth and flowering. Periodic fertilization during the year also helps keep the plant in flower.

Orange flame vine can also be grown as a loose shrub, becoming at least 10 to 15 feet wide and 6 to 8 feet tall. It can be planted 5 to 8 feet apart to form a solid mass within a couple of years after planting. It makes a good soil stabilizer for steep slopes. Shoots can extend several feet from the fence or other structure supporting the vine. Consider the growth habit of this plant before planting in the landscape as regular pruning will remove the flowers.

Other species exist including *Combretum grandiflorum*, which has red flowers and reddish new growth. Propagation is by stem cuttings in spring and summer, seed, or layering.

Design Considerations

Orange flame vine delivers vivid orange, brushlike flower clusters and a lush, twining habit that adds bold color, tropical texture, and strong seasonal drama to the landscape. Its vigorous, sprawling growth performs best in full sun on sturdy supports such as large arbors, pergolas, or fences where its cascading form can be fully appreciated. It pairs well with sun-loving companions that balance and extend its intensity—blue plumbago (*Plumbago auiculata*), purple salvia (*Salvia* spp.), porterweed (*Stachytarpetta jamaciensis*), and firebush (*Hamelia patens*)—and with foliage plants like gingers (various species), heliconias (*Heliconia* spp.), crotons (*Codiaeum variegatum*), and coontie (*Zamia integrifolia*) for added mass and structure. Finish the composition with drought-tolerant grasses or low groundcovers such as wild coffee (*Psychotria nervosa*) or pentas (*Pentas lanceolata*) to create a cohesive, layered base.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases of major concern.

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