



Cooperative Extension Service
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

Bougainvillea spp.¹

Edward F. Gilman²

Introduction

An evergreen shrubby vine, *Bougainvillea* is popular for its long-lasting, colorful flower bracts which appear periodically throughout most of the year but are especially plentiful in winter and spring (Fig. 1). Although flower bracts of purple or red are commonly seen, cultivars are now available in apricot, white, yellow, and orange. *Bougainvillea* can be trained to stand alone as a sprawling shrub, or allowed to grow naturally where it will quickly cover fences or climb up into trees. Planted on top of a wall, it will cascade over the side in great bouquets of color. With careful pruning, *Bougainvillea* can also be used as an espalier or in containers at poolside. It can also be trained as a standard with a single trunked tree. Dwarf cultivars are used as colorful ground covers. Plants can be grown in containers during the warm months in cooler areas of the country. They could be overwintered in a warm spot outside or in a sunny location inside, or replanted each year as an annual.

General Information

Scientific name: *Bougainvillea* spp.

Pronunciation: boog-in-VIL-ee-uh species

Common name(s): Bougainvillea

Family: *Nyctaginaceae*

Plant type: shrub; ground cover

USDA hardiness zones: 9B through 11 (Fig. 2)

Planting month for zone 9: year round

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: specimen; hedge; container or above-ground planter; mass planting; ground cover; trained as a standard; espalier;

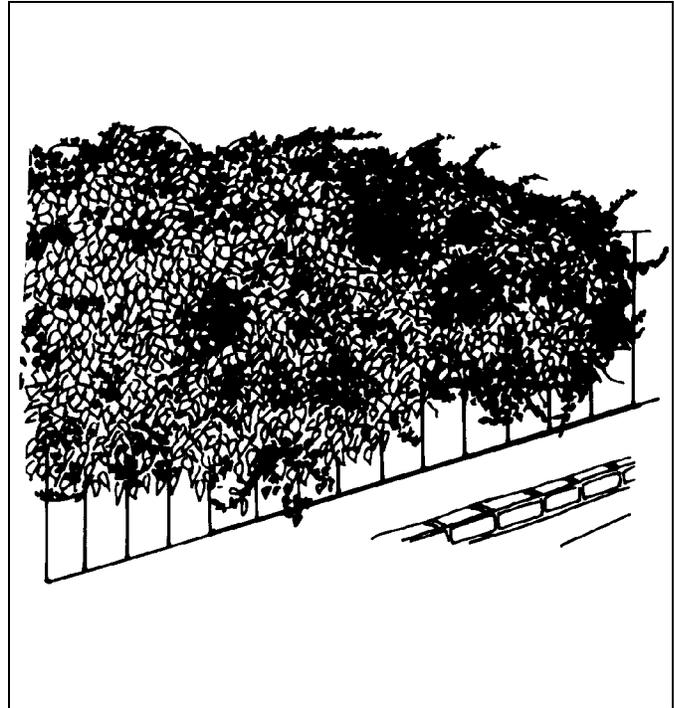


Figure 1. Bougainvillea.

hanging basket; cascading down a wall

Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

Description

Height: depends upon supporting structure

Spread: 15 to 40 feet

Plant habit: spreading; round

1. This document is Fact Sheet FPS-70, one of a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: October 1999. Please visit the EDIS web site at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.
2. Edward F. Gilman, professor, Environmental Horticulture Department, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, 32611.

The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer authorized to provide research, educational information and other services only to individuals and institutions that function without regard to race, color, sex, age, handicap, or national origin. For information on obtaining other extension publications, contact your county Cooperative Extension Service office. Florida Cooperative Extension Service / Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences / University of Florida / Christine Taylor Waddill, Dean



Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Plant density: moderate

Growth rate: fast

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: undulate

Leaf shape: ovate

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen

Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches

Leaf color: variegated

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: purple; red; lavender; yellow

Flower characteristic: flowers periodically throughout the year

Fruit

Fruit shape: elongated

Fruit length: less than .5 inch

Fruit cover: dry or hard

Fruit color: unknown

Fruit characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: not particularly showy; can be trained to grow with a short, single trunk; typically multi-trunked or clumping stems

Current year stem/twig color: brown

Current year stem/twig thickness: thin

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in full sun

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

Drought tolerance: high

Soil salt tolerances: unknown

Plant spacing: 36 to 60 inches

Other

Roots: not applicable

Winter interest: plant has winter interest due to unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter trunk, or winter flowers

Outstanding plant: plant has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more

Invasive potential: not known to be invasive

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

Use and Management

Growing best in full sun or light shade on well-drained, acid soils, Bougainvillea can tolerate hot, dry locations fairly well but flowers bountifully in full sun with regular watering. Chlorosis can be a problem in alkaline soil. Regular pruning may be necessary to shape the plant or direct its growth since shoots often grow vigorously, but Bougainvillea tolerates trimming well. These vigorous shoots can stunt growth on the rest of the plant if they are left to develop. Be careful when trimming to avoid injury from the 1 to 2-inch-long thorns. This is generally a low-maintenance plant.

Plants often lose many leaves following a flowering period. This usually precedes a new growth flush.

Available cultivars include: 'Barbara Karst', bright red bracts, vigorous growth; 'Afterglow', yellow-orange, heavy bloom, sparse foliage; 'Hawaii' ('Raspberry Ice'), red bloom, leaves have golden yellow margins, is one of the hardiest. Dwarf cultivars include: 'Crimson Jewel', combines crimson, pink, and orange; 'Oo-la-la', very purple. There is also a cultivar available with variegated foliage, 'Variegata'. *Bougainvillea spectabilis* has purple-red flower bracts, thorny stems, leaves thick, large, and hairy. *Bougainvillea glabra* has smooth leaves, rose-red flower bracts, is less thorny, and is hardier.

Propagation is by seeds or cuttings.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern but occasionally leaf-chewing worms or aphids.

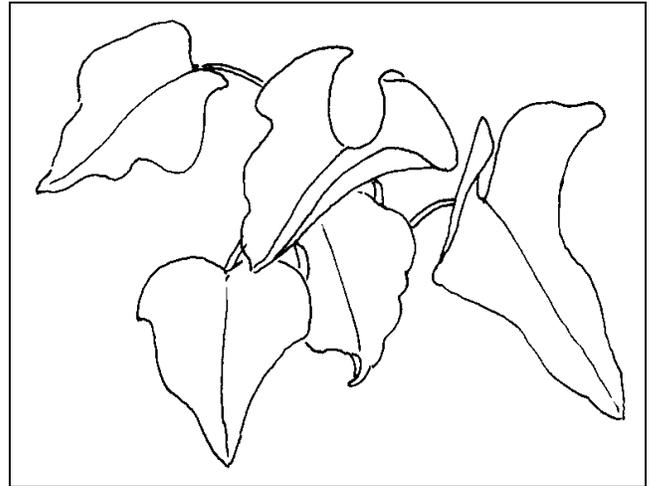


Figure 3. Foliage of Bougainvillea