



Cooperative Extension Service  
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

## *Dracaena marginata* 'Tricolor'<sup>1</sup>

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### Introduction

This fine-textured, evergreen shrub is distinguished by its relatively thin and irregular stems that are topped by a rosette of ribbon-like leaves (Fig. 1). The stems of this plant can reach a height of 15 feet and are covered with distinctive foliar scars. The variegated, leathery leaves have a purple stripe along their margins. The white and red flowers occur in elongate panicles above the leaves and are not showy. The small, golden berries of this shrub are also insignificant and not commonly produced in Florida. Multiple thin, curving stalks with narrow ribbon-like, green leaves edged in purplish-red and having a gold stripe along the leaf margin, distinguish this *Dracaena* from its multitude of relatives.

### General Information

**Scientific name:** *Dracaena marginata* 'Tricolor'

**Pronunciation:** druh-SEE-nuh mar-jin-NAY-tuh

**Common name(s):** Variegated Dracaena

**Family:** *Agavaceae*

**Plant type:** shrub

**USDA hardiness zones:** 10B through 11 (Fig. 2)

**Planting month for zone 10 and 11:** year round

**Origin:** not native to North America

**Uses:** container or above-ground planter; border; suitable for growing indoors; accent

**Availability:** generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

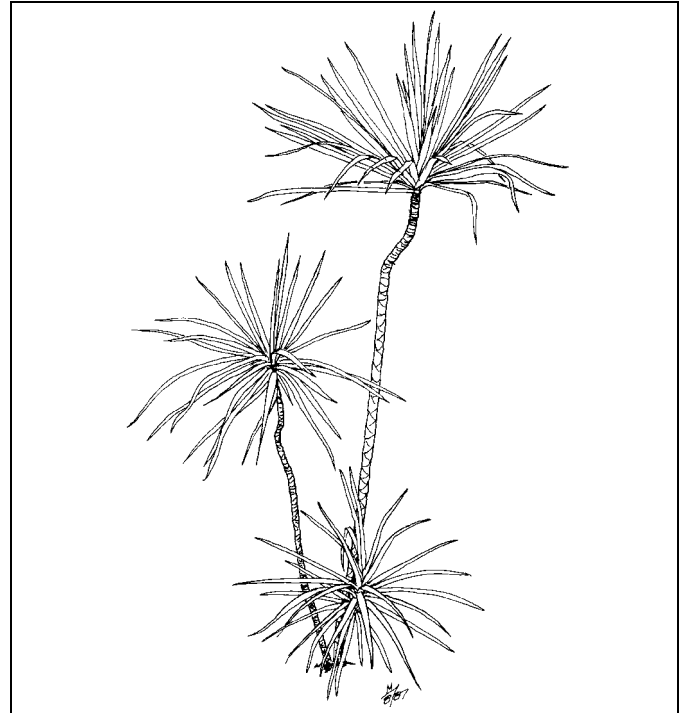


Figure 1. Variegated Dracaena.

### Description

**Height:** 8 to 15 feet

**Spread:** 3 to 8 feet

**Plant habit:** upright

**Plant density:** open

**Growth rate:** slow

**Texture:** fine

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

### Foliage

- Leaf arrangement:** spiral
- Leaf type:** simple
- Leaf margin:** entire
- Leaf shape:** linear
- Leaf venation:** parallel
- Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen
- Leaf blade length:** 18 to 36 inches
- Leaf color:** purple or red
- Fall color:** no fall color change
- Fall characteristic:** not showy

### Flower

- Flower color:** white
- Flower characteristic:** summer flowering

### Fruit

- Fruit shape:** round
- Fruit length:** less than .5 inch
- Fruit cover:** fleshy
- Fruit color:** unknown
- Fruit characteristic:** inconspicuous and not showy

### Trunk and Branches

- Trunk/bark/branches:** showy; typically multi-trunked or clumping stems
- Current year stem/twig color:** reddish
- Current year stem/twig thickness:** very thick

### Culture

- Light requirement:** plant grows in part shade/part sun
- Soil tolerances:** clay; sand; acidic; slightly alkaline; loam
- Drought tolerance:** high
- Soil salt tolerances:** poor
- Plant spacing:** 36 to 60 inches

### Other

- Roots:** usually not a problem
- Winter interest:** no special winter interest
- Outstanding plant:** not particularly outstanding
- Invasive potential:** not known to be invasive

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

## Use and Management

The upright, unbranched stems form a delicate, somewhat abstract silhouette, perfect for accent planting or for low-maintenance container culture. 'Tricolor' makes a wonderful houseplant or container specimen outdoors. It is a fine specimen to silhouette against a wall at night with uplighting. Red-edged *Dracaena* is commonly used as an indoor or patio plant for its tropical effect. It also functions as a foundation and specimen shrub in warm climates and has symmetrical, espalier features that make it popular. *Dracaena marginata* 'Tricolor' has long been used as one of our more attractive indoor foliage plants. It will grow well in light conditions ranging from full sun to dense shade; fertile well-drained soils are preferred. This durable plant requires little maintenance and is quite drought resistant. Fluoride damage may cause necrotic areas to become apparent along the leaf margins.

*Dracaena* grows in shade or sun and is tolerant of drought and a wide variety of soil types, though preferring an organic soil with plenty of moisture. Two or more branches form after pruning a stem. This technique can be used to increase the density of the plant. This can be beneficial since lower leaves drop from the stems as the plant grows taller leaving the bottom of the plant bare. Cut one or two of the stems to a point where new foliage is needed. Several weeks later, new growth emerges from this point.

Propagated is usually by stem cuttings and air layers. It is also grown from 2 to 4-inch long stem sections laid horizontally on a well-drained medium.

## Pests and Diseases

Spider mites are a problem for *Dracaena marginata* 'Tricolor' when it is grown indoors. Leaf spot is a troublesome pest in outdoor locations.