



Cooperative Extension Service
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

Maranta leuconeura¹

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Introduction

Available in various leaf patterns and colorations, Prayer Plant is so named for its habit of folding its leaves closed each night (Fig. 1). This spreading rhizomatous perennial forms attractive low-growing clumps, suitable for groundcover or container use. It grows nicely indoors as a house plant and is often used as a ground cover in shopping malls.

General Information

Scientific name: *Maranta leuconeura*

Pronunciation: muh-RAN-tuh loo-koe-NOOR-ruh

Common name(s): Prayer Plant, Rabbit Tracks

Family: *Marantaceae*

Plant type: perennial; herbaceous

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; mass planting; edging; hanging basket; suitable for growing indoors; cascading down a wall

Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

Description

Height: .5 to 2 feet

Spread: 2 to 4 feet

Plant habit: spreading

Plant density: dense

Growth rate: slow

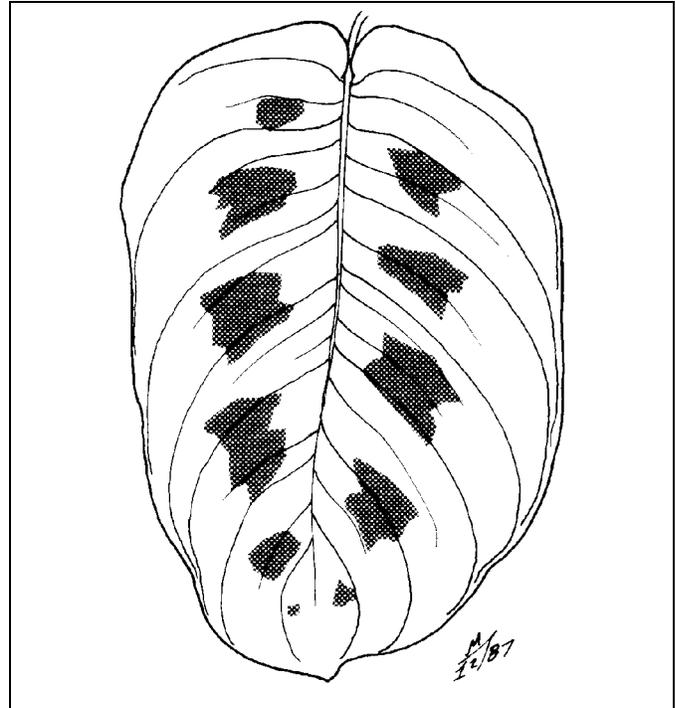


Figure 1. Prayer Plant.

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: oblong

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Leaf venation: pinnate
Leaf type and persistence: evergreen
Leaf blade length: 4 to 8 inches
Leaf color: variegated
Fall color: no fall color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: white
Flower characteristic: flowers periodically throughout the year

Fruit

Fruit shape: unknown
Fruit length: unknown
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: thick

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in the shade
Soil tolerances: clay; acidic; loam
Drought tolerance:
Soil salt tolerances: poor
Plant spacing: 24 to 36 inches

Other

Roots: not applicable
Winter interest: no special winter interest
Outstanding plant: not particularly outstanding
Invasive potential: not known to be invasive
Pest resistance: very sensitive to one or more pests or diseases which can affect plant health or aesthetics

Use and Management

Prayer Plant needs fairly rich, moist but well-drained, organic soils in shady locations. Too bright a light will bleach the foliage. High humidity is essential for best growth. Plant on 8 to 12-inch centers for quick establishment of a solid ground cover.

There are a variety of cultivars available that have been selected for their especially showy leaf coloration patterns.

Propagation is by division of the clumps.

Problems include nematodes, mites, and slugs. Avoid hot, dry locations.

Pests and Diseases

Prayer Plant is susceptible to root rots, especially in poorly drained soils.