Acalypha hispida

Edward F. Gilman

Introduction

Chenille Plant is a vigorous, upright, coarse-textured shrub that usually attains a height of 5 to 6 feet (Fig. 1). Older specimens can grow taller with some support. The stems are heavily foliated with 6 to 8 inch long, ovate, medium-green leaves. The flowers of Chenille Plant are attractive and droop in cattail-like, pendent clusters up to 18 inches in length. Flowers are showy, red, and borne by female plants during warm months of the year.

General Information

Scientific name: Acalypha hispida
Pronunciation: ack-uh-LIFE-uh HISS-pid-uh
Common name(s): Chenille Plant
Family: Euphorbiaceae
Plant type: shrub
USDA hardiness zones: 10 through 11 (Fig. 2)
Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round
Origin: not native to North America
Uses: hedge; specimen; foundation; border; mass planting; accent
Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant

Description

Foliage

Height: 4 to 6 feet
Spread: 6 to 8 feet
Plant habit: upright
Plant density: moderate

Growth rate: fast
Texture: coarse

Leaf arrangement: alternate
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: serrate

Figure 1. Chenille Plant.

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**Leaf shape:** ovate  
**Leaf venation:** pinnate; arcuate  
**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:** white  
**Flower characteristic:** year-round flowering  

**Fruit**  
**Fruit shape:** no fruit  
**Fruit length:** no fruit  
**Fruit cover:** no fruit  
**Fruit color:** no fruit  
**Fruit characteristic:** no fruit  

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

**Current year stem/twig color:** green  
**Current year stem/twig thickness:** medium  

**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:** 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  

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*Figure 2.* Shaded area represents potential planting range.
Use and Management

Chenille Plant is a beautiful flowering shrub that is commonly used as an accent, hedge, specimen, or container plant. Its long period of bloom makes it a showy centerpiece for any tropical or subtropical garden. It is well suited for planting in a container to be set on a deck or patio.

Chenille Plant performs well in many types of well-drained landscape soils. It grows and flowers best in full sun, with little care other than irrigation needed to maintain the plant once it is established. After the plant finishes flowering, pruning may be needed to keep it a desired size.

Propagation is by cuttings.

Pests and Diseases

There are no diseases of major concern associated with Chenille Plant. Scales, mites and aphids may be troublesome pests in some landscapes, especially when grown in partial shade.