



Cooperative Extension Service
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

*Ageratum houstonianum*¹

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Introduction

Floss Flower has fluffy looking flowers available in shades of blue, lavender, pink and white that can be used for edging, massing, or in containers. The taller cultivars may be used as cut flowers. Others use it in rock gardens or as a winter house plant. *Ageratum* grows in well-drained, medium rich soil and does not tolerate dryness. Provide full sun or partial shade and remove the old flowers to promote continuous blooming. Flossflower dies at the first frost. Plants grow 6 to 14 inches tall depending on cultivar.

General Information

Scientific name: *Ageratum houstonianum*
Pronunciation: adje-jur-RAY-tum hoos-toe-nee-AY-num
Common name(s): Mexican *Ageratum*, Flossflower
Family: *Compositae*
Plant type: annual
USDA hardiness zones: all zones (Fig. 1)
Planting month for zone 7: Jun
Planting month for zone 8: May
Planting month for zone 9: Apr; Sep; Oct
Planting month for zone 10 and 11: Feb; Nov; Dec
Origin: not native to North America
Uses: container or above-ground planter; attracts butterflies; edging
Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

Description

Height: .5 to 1.5 feet
Spread: .5 to 1 feet
Plant habit: round
Plant density: dense
Growth rate: moderate
Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: dentate
Leaf shape: ovate
Leaf venation: reticulate
Leaf type and persistence: not applicable
Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: not applicable
Fall characteristic: not applicable

Flower

Flower color: blue; pink; lavender
Flower characteristic: showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: no fruit
Fruit length: no fruit
Fruit cover: no fruit
Fruit color: not applicable
Fruit characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

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Figure 1. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: not applicable
Current year stem/twig color: not applicable
Current year stem/twig thickness: not applicable

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun
Soil tolerances: clay; sand; acidic; loam
Drought tolerance:
Soil salt tolerances: poor
Plant spacing: 12 to 18 inches

Other

Roots: not applicable
Winter interest: not applicable
Outstanding plant: not particularly outstanding
Invasive potential: not known to be invasive
Pest resistance: no serious pests are normally seen on the plant

Use and Management

Seed can be planted inside or in the garden. Do not cover the seed as light is needed for germination. Germination occurs in 5 to 10 days at temperatures between 70 and 75-degrees F. Pinch seedlings to encourage branching. Plant *Ageratum* 10 to 12 inches apart to form a solid mass of fine-textured pink to purple flowers. In USDA hardiness zones 9b, 10, and 11, Flossflower is generally planted in the fall for winter and spring color.

Cultivars include ‘Adriatic’, ‘Blue Blazer’, ‘Hawaii Series’ ‘Madison’, ‘Ocean’ ‘Pacific’, ‘Royal Jay’, and ‘Royal Delft’. ‘Blue Blanket’ is a sturdy cultivar and plants are uniform. ‘Pacific’ produces a wonderful flower display under Florida conditions.

Ageratum may be attacked by two insects. The corn earworm tunnels in stems and feeds on the foliage. The greenhouse leaf tier ties leaves together with webbing then feeds on them.

Pests and Diseases

The only disease of consequence is powdery mildew and late in the season infections can be ignored. Powdery mildew is a white or gray powdery growth on the leaves.