



Cooperative Extension Service  
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

## *Hibiscus coccineus*<sup>1</sup>

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### Introduction

The Scarlet Rose Mallow is a narrow, upright, herbaceous perennial that can reach a height of 4 to 8 feet (Fig. 1). The 5- to 6-inch-long leaves of this plant are palmately lobed into 3, 5, or 7 parts. These finger-like lobes are slender and have jagged teeth along their margins. Deep red flowers that are 5 to 6 inches wide appear in mid to late summer. These flowers are funnelliform and occur on long axillary peduncles. There are 10 or more involucre bracts present on the flower. They are curved upward and are much shorter than the calyx lobes.

### General Information

**Scientific name:** *Hibiscus coccineus*

**Pronunciation:** hye-BISS-kus kock-SIN-ee-us

**Common name(s):** Swamp-Mallow

**Family:** *Malvaceae*

**Plant type:** perennial; herbaceous

**USDA hardiness zones:** 8 through 10 (Fig. 2)

**Planting month for zone 8:** year round

**Planting month for zone 9:** year round

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

**Origin:** native to Florida

**Uses:** accent; border; mass planting; attracts butterflies; attracts hummingbirds

**Availability:** somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant

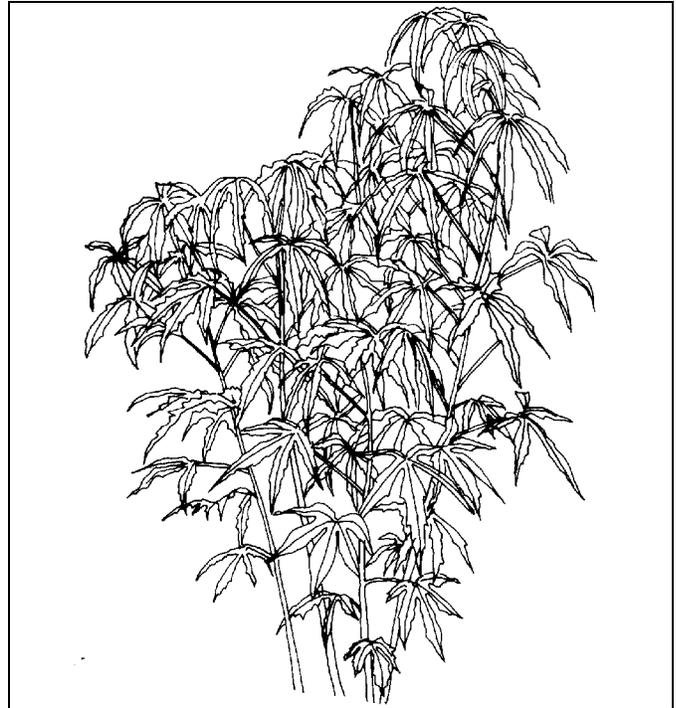


Figure 1. Swamp-Mallow.

### Description

**Height:** 4 to 8 feet

**Spread:** 3 to 4 feet

**Plant habit:** upright

**Plant density:** open

**Growth rate:** fast

**Texture:** fine

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

### Foliage

- Leaf arrangement:** alternate
- Leaf type:** simple
- Leaf margin:** lobed; serrate
- Leaf shape:** star-shaped
- Leaf venation:** palmate
- Leaf type and persistence:** deciduous
- Leaf blade length:** 4 to 8 inches
- Leaf color:** green
- Fall color:** no fall color change
- Fall characteristic:** not showy

### Flower

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

### Fruit

- Fruit shape:** elongated
- Fruit length:** .5 to 1 inch
- Fruit cover:** dry or hard
- Fruit color:** unknown
- Fruit characteristic:** inconspicuous and not showy

### Trunk and Branches

- Trunk/bark/branches:** 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:** extended flooding; acidic; sand; loam; clay;
- Drought tolerance:** moderate
- Soil salt tolerances:** poor
- Plant spacing:** 24 to 36 inches

### Other

- Roots:** not applicable
- Winter interest:** no special winter interest
- Outstanding plant:** plant has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more

**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

The Scarlet Rose Mallow is frequently used as a specimen and can be placed in a border. It may also be utilized around the edge of a pond or along a stream since this type site is similar to their native Georgia and Florida habitat.

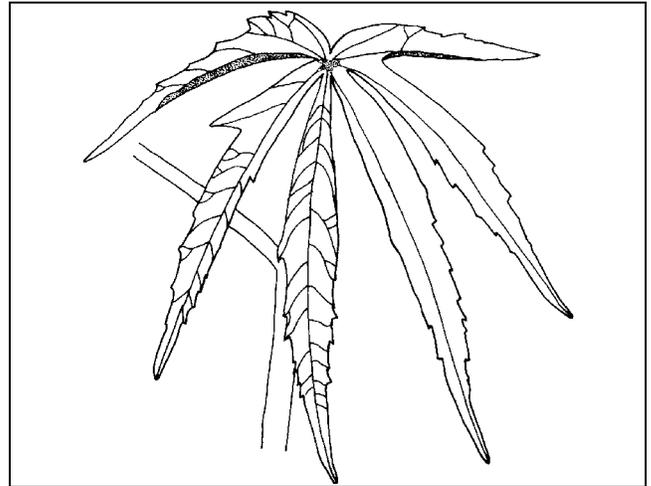
Although the Scarlet Rose Mallow is native to wetland areas it is tolerant of somewhat drier soils. This plant requires a full sun or partial shade location in the landscape. Flowering and growth in the shade are poor.

Cultivars include: 'Lord Baltimore', deep red flowers.

*Hibiscus coccineus* can be propagated by seed or division.

## Pests and Diseases

The Scarlet Rose Mallow may be occasionally bothered by a stalk borer. Grasshoppers also enjoy chewing the foliage and flower buds. This can spoil the flower display. Be prepared to provide control for this pest. I usually squash them between my hands in the evening as a means of mechanical control.



**Figure 3.** Foliage of Swamp-Mallow