



Cooperative Extension Service
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

*Ruellia caroliniensis*¹

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Introduction

Wild Petunia is a native wildflower found throughout Florida in native woodlands (Fig. 1). They spread and are known as strong growers under adverse conditions. This 12-tall plant has light green leaves that are medium in texture. Blue or violet flowers appear on this perennial in the spring, summer and fall. These flowers are showy, and their nectar is appealing to various species of butterflies.

General Information

Scientific name: *Ruellia caroliniensis*

Pronunciation: roo-EL-lee-uh kair-roe-lin-nee-EN-sis

Common name(s): Wild Petunia

Family: *Acanthaceae*

Plant type: perennial; herbaceous

USDA hardiness zones: 8 through 11 (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: ground cover; mass planting; attracts butterflies; hanging basket; cascading down a wall

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

Description

Height: .5 to 1 feet

Spread: 1 to 2 feet

Plant habit: spreading



Figure 1. Wild Petunia.

Plant density: moderate

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: fine

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite

Leaf type: simple

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Leaf margin: entire
Leaf shape: oblong
Leaf venation: pinnate
Leaf type and persistence: deciduous; evergreen
Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: no fall color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: blue; violet
Flower characteristic: spring flowering; summer flowering; fall flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: unknown
Fruit length: unknown
Fruit cover: unknown
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: green
Current year stem/twig thickness: medium

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun; plant grows in the shade
Soil tolerances: occasionally wet; acidic; sand; loam; clay;
Drought tolerance: moderate
Soil salt tolerances: poor
Plant spacing: 18 to 24 inches

Other

Roots: sprouts from roots or lower trunk
Winter interest: no special winter interest
Outstanding plant: not particularly outstanding
Invasive potential: may self-seed each year
Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests

Use and Management

Wild Petunia may be used as flowering ground cover and in front of perennial borders. They are attractive when massed together or planted in a container where flexible stems droop over the pot. They would make an attractive hanging basket.

Place *Ruellia* in an area of the landscape that receives full to partial shade. These species will grow best in well-drained soils and are very drought tolerant. *Ruellia* species will be frozen to the ground in the winter but regrowth should occur from the roots throughout Florida.

These plants may be propagated by seed or cuttings. *Ruellia* can spread, as it readily reseeds itself.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern.