



Cooperative Extension Service  
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

## *Stachytarpheta jamaicensis*<sup>1</sup>

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### Introduction

Porterweed is a small perennial shrub that becomes woody toward the base of the stem as it grows to about one-year-old. Plants grow about 4-feet-tall by 6-feet wide before stems droop and touch the ground. Blue or pink flowers are borne terminally on long, stringy spikes at the ends of the stems. They attract butterflies to the landscape. Rich, dark green foliage displayed on square, green stems makes Porterweed a nice addition to any, sunny landscape.

### General Information

**Scientific name:** *Stachytarpheta jamaicensis*

**Pronunciation:** stake-kee-tar-FEE-tuh jah-may-SEN-sis

**Common name(s):** Blue Porterweed

**Family:** *Verbenaceae*

**Plant type:** shrub; perennial; herbaceous

**USDA hardiness zones:** 10 through 11 (Fig. 1)

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

**Origin:** not native to North America

**Uses:** hedge; border; mass planting; attracts butterflies

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

### Description

**Height:** 4 to 8 feet

**Spread:** 4 to 8 feet

**Plant habit:** round

**Plant density:** dense

**Growth rate:** fast

**Texture:** medium

### Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** opposite/subopposite

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** serrate

**Leaf shape:** ovate

**Leaf venation:** pinnate; reticulate

**Leaf type and persistence:** semi-evergreen

**Leaf blade length:** less than 2 inches

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** no fall color change

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

### Flower

**Flower color:** pink; blue

**Flower characteristic:** 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:** not particularly showy; typically multi-trunked or clumping stems

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

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Figure 1. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Current year stem/twig thickness: thin

### Culture

**Light requirement:** plant grows in part shade/part sun

**Soil tolerances:** acidic; alkaline; sand; loam; clay;

**Drought tolerance:** high

**Soil salt tolerances:** unknown

**Plant spacing:** 36 to 60 inches

### Other

**Roots:** usually not a problem

**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:** long-term health usually not affected by pests

### Use and Management

Porterweed is frequently used in a mass planting along a foundation, or as a clipped or natural unclipped hedge to provide continuous color to the landscape. Space plants about 3- to 4-feet apart. A row will maintain a nice uniform shape for 6 or more months without pruning. Regular clipping can maintain a uniform shape for more than a year before the plant needs to be cut back to thicken the growth. Unclipped plants begin to open up as stems droop to the ground. For this reason, they are usually cut back each year, or anytime the plant becomes leggy. This allows new growth to fill in and thicken the plant.

Locate Porterweed in a sunny location in any soil. Provide irrigation during establishment and then in extended drought in the summer. Fertilize about twice each year to maintain foliage color and provide for continuous growth.

### Pests and Diseases

No serious pests or diseases are known to affect Porterweed.

