Verbena rigida

Edward F. Gilman

Introduction

Verbena rigida is a very short, ground cover with spiky flowers. It may reach a height of 12 to 24 inches and has an erect growth habit. Rigid branching stems support 2- to 3-inch-long, narrow, sharply-toothed leaves. Dense spikes of purple flowers appear in the spring, summer and fall. These flower spikes are 1 to 3 inches long and are part of a terminal panicle. They are often cut for flower arrangements and are long-lasting. Vervain is an excellent ground cover or edging plant. Vervain is easily grown in full sun on a well-drained soil. It is very heat tolerant and will endure a moderate period of drought. Periodic pruning enhances blooming and improves the plants growth habit.

General Information

**Scientific name:** Verbena rigida  
**Pronunciation:** ver-BEEN-nuh RIDGE-jid-duh  
**Common name(s):** Vervain  
**Family:** Verbenaceae  
**Plant type:** perennial; herbaceous; ground cover  
**USDA hardiness zones:** 7 through 9 (Fig. 1)  
**Planting month for zone 7:** Jun; Jul  
**Planting month for zone 8:** May; Jun; Jul; Aug  
**Planting month for zone 9:** Apr; May; Jun; Jul; Aug; Sep  
**Origin:** not native to North America  
**Uses:** mass planting; ground cover; attracts butterflies; cascading down a wall; hanging basket; naturalizing  
**Availability:** generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

| Description | Height: 1 to 1.5 feet  
| Spread: 3 to 5 feet  
| Plant habit: spreading  
| Plant density: moderate  
| Growth rate: moderate  
| Texture: fine  

Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** opposite/subopposite  
**Leaf type:** simple  
**Leaf margin:** dentate  
**Leaf shape:** oblong; obovate  
**Leaf venation:** pinnate  
**Leaf type and persistence:** semi-evergreen; evergreen  
**Leaf blade length:** 2 to 4 inches  
**Leaf color:** green  
**Fall color:** no fall color change  
**Fall characteristic:** not applicable

Flower

**Flower color:** purple  
**Flower characteristic:** spring flowering; summer flowering; fall flowering

Fruit

**Fruit shape:** unknown  
**Fruit length:** unknown

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Figure 1. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**Fruit cover:** unknown
**Fruit color:** unknown
**Fruit characteristic:** inconspicuous and not showy

**Trunk and Branches**

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

**Culture**

**Light requirement:** plant grows in full sun
**Soil tolerances:** acidic; alkaline; sand; loam; clay;
**Drought tolerance:** moderate
**Soil salt tolerances:** unknown
**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:** aggressive, spreading plant
**Pest resistance:** long-term health usually not affected by pests

**Use and Management**

Cuttings of Vervain will root in mild climate areas. However, seeds germinate quickly, and it blooms the first year from seed.

**Pests and Diseases**

This plant is susceptible to powdery mildew and white flies.