

Porterweed *Stachytarpheta spp.*

Plant Description:

Porterweed is an annual in North Florida, but may overwinter if protected from the cold. Small blue or pink flowers appear in numbers on long spikes at the end of the stems, and are very attractive to butterflies and hummingbirds. Plants vary in size and growth habit depending on the species. The Florida native *S. jamaicensis* has a low-growing, sprawling habit and stays below 1 foot tall not including its blue-flowered spikes. Commonly cultivated exotic species include *S. urticifolia* which reaches 5 feet tall and features flowers that are described as slightly smaller and darker blue with a white center, and *S. mutabilis* which can reach 7 feet tall and has light pink flowers. There is also said to be a hybrid of our native *S. jamaicensis* and the exotic *S. urticifolia* called *S. x intercedens* which looks like the native but has an upright growth habit reaching 2-3 feet tall. And while this plant can become weedy in warmer areas of the state, it makes a nice addition to a sunny North Florida butterfly garden.

Mature Size: varies by species, 1-7 feet

Growth Rate: Fast

Plant Habit: Upright, Round

Plant Spacing: 3 – 5 feet

Ornamental Characteristics & Uses:

Foliage Color: Dark Green

Flower Color: Blue or Pink



Bloom Time: Summer – Fall

Attracts Wildlife: Butterflies and Hummingbirds

Uses: Landscapes, Large Container Gardens

Growing Requirements:

Cold Hardiness Zone(s): 9b – 11

Exposure: Full Sun to Partial Shade

Water Needs: Low

Soil pH: Acidic to Alkaline

Soil Tolerances: High drought tolerance; tolerates sand or clay soils

Maintenance: Easy/Low



General Care & Growing Tips:

Provide irrigation during establishment and in periods of extended drought during summer. Two, light applications of slow-release fertilizer per year will help maintain foliage color and provide continuous growth and flowering. Plants that survive the winter but die back to the ground should be cut back just before new spring growth resumes. Plants that become leggy can be pruned back any time. Deadheading of flowers is not necessary.

References:

Gilman, E. F. (1999). *Stachytarpheta jamaicensis* Blue Porterweed. University of Florida. <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/fp559>

Wichman, T., Knox, G., Gilman, E., Sandrock, D., Schutzman, B., Alvarez, E., Schoellhorn, R., and Larson, B. (2006). *Florida-Friendly Plant List*. Florida Yards and Neighborhoods Handbook. University of Florida.

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Photo Credit: Alicia Lamborn