



Florida Plants of the Year

Landscaping on golf courses ranges from very formal annual beds and sheared hedges to the natural look of aquatic plants and clumps of native grasses. The Florida Nurserymen and Growers Association has begun a program that will identify superior plant material that performs well but is often underutilized. If you are looking for proven plant material to provide color and diversity on your course you may want to give these 1998 Florida Plants of the Year a closer look.

The program's selection committee includes horticulturists, nurserymen, educators, architects and other professional members of the horticulture industry from central, north and south Florida.

Ground covers

PEACOCK GINGER

Kaempferias are a group of low herbaceous perennials usually less than one foot tall. Most have large 4- to 10-inch round or oval shaped leaves. The basic leaf color ranges from green to purple. However, most are striped or spotted with various combinations of purple, silver, white or iridescent markings that give the group their common name Peacock Ginger. Flowers are solitary, usually four-petaled and produced daily throughout the growing season. Flower color ranges from pure white to pink to purple.

Kaempferias are trouble-free, shade-loving ground covers that form thick clumps that out-complete weeds for available space. They are excellent companion plants for hostas in north Florida and competent replacements



for them in south and central Florida. Kaempferias, which are native to Southeast Asia, are naturally winter dormant, so they are hardy into Zone 8 and adaptable to all of Florida.

Commonly found varieties include: *K. rotunda* 'Asian Crocus', *K. roscoeana*, *K. masonii*, *K. pulchra* and *K. gilbertii*. New varieties include: *K.* 'Brush Strokes', *K.* 'Satin Checks', *K.* 'Shazam' and *K. pulchra* 'Silver Spot.'

Common Name: Peacock Ginger

Botanical Name: *Kaempferia* spp.

Hardiness: Zone 8

Mature Height: 12"

Classification: Herbaceous perennial

Use: Ground cover

Characteristics: Leaves range in color from green to purple and are spotted or striped and oval

AUTUMN FERN

Ferns are becoming more widely used ground covers in large drifts. *Cyrtomium falcatum* (Holly Fern) has been planted for years, but *Dryopteris erythrosora* (Autumn Fern) is quickly becoming as popular. This clumping fern has upright foliage reaching about 24" in height and spread. Also called Japanese Shield Fern, its young foliage is an eye-catching red that matures to a glossy dark green.

"Autumn Fern has fewer insect problems and seems more cold

tolerant than Holly Fern, and this makes it a more desirable selection," says P.J. Klinger of Lake Brantley Plant Corp., Longwood, Florida.



Autumn Fern is hardy to Zone 8 and evergreens without frost. The best growth is achieved in an organic, well-drained soil in light shade to shade. Though

the water requirements are moderate, Autumn Fern will signal a water stress with wilting and a change in foliage color.

Common Name: Autumn Fern

Botanical Name: *Dryopteris erythrosora*

Hardiness: Zone 8

Mature Height x Spread: 24" x 24"

Classification: Herbaceous perennial

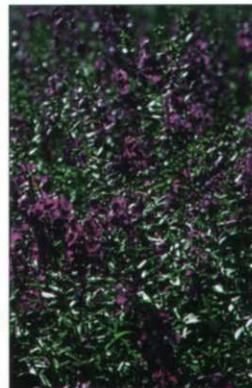
Landscape Use: Masses in shade

Characteristics: Clumping fern growing to 24"; new growth is coppery red, maturing to deep green

Masses and Borders

HILO PRINCESS ANGELONIA

Angelonia is a great new plant for Florida. A bushy perennial from



Mexico and the Caribbean, it grows well in our climate. 'Hilo Princess' reaches a mature height up to 24 inches and the stems support groupings of

deep violet-blue flowers that are present throughout the warm months. When planted in a moist, rich, well drained area, *Angelonia* will thrive in a wide range of light levels. It makes quite an impact as a mass planting or in combination with other flowers in decorative containers. Although some say to treat 'Hilo Princess' as an annual in colder areas, it tends to come back reliably as far north as Gainesville.

Common Name: Hilo Princess Angelonia

Botanical Name: *Angelonia angustifolia* 'Hilo Princess'

Hardiness: Zone 8

Mature Height x Spread: 24" x 24"



Classification: Perennial

Landscape Use: Mass planting accent in perennial borders or in containers with other flowers

Characteristics: Deep violet-blue flowers; lance shaped leaves; blooms through warm months

FIREPOWER DWARF NANDINA

A plant long known for its fall color, but underutilized in the landscape is *Nandina Domestica* 'Fire power.'

Also called dwarf heavenly bamboo, this dense, low-growing cultivar is usually tinged with orange or red, but becomes an intense red mound in the fall and winter. Firepower,



with its rounded habit, reaches a mature height and spread of about two feet.

When planted in groupings or drifts behind low ground covers, Firepower creates an impressive impact. It is adaptable to a wide range of conditions, but prefers moist, fertile and well-drained soils.

Common Name: Firepower Dwarf Nandina

Horticultural Name: *Nandina domestica* 'Firepower'

Hardiness: Zone 6

Height x Spread: 2' x 2'

Classification: Low growing shrub

Landscape Use: Masses or borders

Characteristics: Dense, dwarf growing variety; intense fall color of red

Shrubs

FIREBUSH

When designing a landscape in south

or central Florida, be sure to give *Hamelia patens* (Firebush) some thought as a small accent tree.

Reaching 10 feet in height and six feet in spread in warmer areas, its

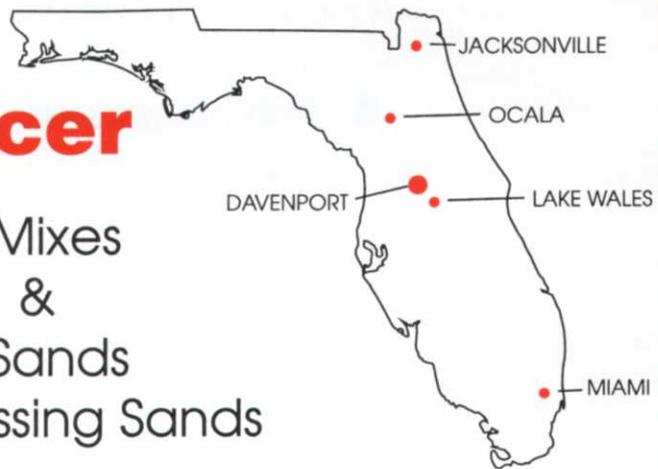


showy orange tubular flowers (March-November) are a big attraction to butterflies and hummingbirds. The leaves of

this evergreen shrub are reddish for much of the year, turning green as they mature. Foliage damage will occur in the upper 20s with die back in the upper teens. When knocked to the ground by cold, Firebush has been known to bounce back quickly the following spring. This variety

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prefers moist conditions and is tolerant of full sun to partial shade. Because it is not drought tolerant, be sure to plant near water loving plants in the garden.

Common Name: Firebush

Botanical Name: *Hamelia patens*

Hardiness: Zone 8

Mature Height x Spread: 10' x 6'

Classification: Large shrub to small tree

Landscape Use: Specimen shrub in partial shade

Ornamental: Red leaves with showy orange

Characteristics: tubular flowers attracting butterflies and hummingbirds

PINK LOROPETALUM

A plant that seems to be sweeping the industry is *Loropetalum*. Many of the new popular cultivars are being

developed from *Loropetalum chinense* var. *Rubrum*, which has red



foliage. Cultivars may reach 10 feet; others are easily maintained at four to six feet. Also called fringe flower, *Loropetalum* is tolerant of full sun to shade in moist, well-drained acid soils. Young

leaves are burgundy, maturing to green in the center of the plant. Some cultivars stay redder than others. The pink bloom of the fringe flower is heavy in the spring and then continues sporadically until fall.

Some of the cultivars available in the market today are:

- **Blush** - dense compact growth habit to at best six feet
- **Burgundy** - height will be six to

eight feet with drooping branches; expect this cultivar to bloom several times during the year

- **Zhuzhou** - taller, more open growing form; can be trained like Ligustrum as a multi-trunked small tree
- **Monraz' Razzleberri TM** - a Monrovia Nursery (California) introduction with a low-growing weeping form reaching four to six feet in height and spread.

Common Name: Pink loropetalum

Horticultural Name: *Loropetalum chinense* var. *Rubrum*

Hardiness: Zones 7 & 8

Mature Height: 6' to 10'

Classification: Shrub

Landscape Use: Accent plant or hedge plant

Characteristics: Red foliage, pink flowers

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