

*Acalypha pendula*¹

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Introduction

This ground-hugging, fine-textured relative of the more common chenille plant grows no more than several inches tall. In the full sun it forms a thick canopy of tiny, serrated leaves no more than 3/4 inches long by 1/2 inches wide (Figure 1). Bright red, fussy flowers stand erect above the foliage like soldiers in a field.



Figure 1. dwarf chenille plant.

General Information

Scientific name: *Acalypha pendula*

Pronunciation: ack-uh-LIFE-uh PEN-dyoo-luh

Common name(s): dwarf chenille plant

Family: *Euphorbiaceae*

Plant type: ground cover

USDA hardiness zones: 10 through 11 (Figure 2)

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: hanging basket; ground cover; cascading down a wall

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

Description

Height: 0 to 0.5 feet

Spread: depends upon supporting structure

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Plant habit: spreading

Plant density: dense

Growth rate: slow

Texture: fine

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: serrate

Leaf shape: ovate

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen

Leaf blade length: less than 2 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: red

Flower characteristic: year-round 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 applicable

Current year stem/twig color: green

Current year stem/twig thickness: thin

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun

Soil tolerances: acidic; slightly alkaline; sand; loam

Drought tolerance: moderate

Soil salt tolerance: unknown

Plant spacing: 18 to 24 inches

Other

Roots: not applicable

Winter interest: no special winter interest

Outstanding plant: not particularly outstanding

Invasive potential: not known to be invasive

Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests

Use and Management

Well suited for a hanging basket, dwarf chenille plant will cascade nicely over a wall if planted close to the edge on top of the wall. This plant makes a good ground cover provided people are kept off of it. Like ivy, it tolerates foot traffic poorly. The small stature and slow growth make it a nice addition to a rock garden or other small-scale landscape design.

Dwarf chenille plant performs well in many types of well-drained soils. It grows and flowers best in full sun, with little care other than occasional irrigation needed to maintain the plant once it is established.

Pests and Diseases

There are no diseases of major concern associated with dwarf chenille plants. Scales, mites and aphids may be troublesome pests in some landscapes, especially when plants are grown in partial shade.