**Aptenia cordifolia Baby Sunrose**

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**Introduction**

Inch-long, dark green foliage and bright red, aster-like flowers combine to make baby sunrose a spectacular hanging basket or ground cover for small, exposed, well-drained gardens. Glossy foliage sparkles in the sun forming a superb backdrop displaying the 3/4-inch blossoms nearly year-round. The moderately thick, succulent stems are flexible and easily snapped. They appear to crawl along the soil and hug the ground forming a tight, almost clipped appearance. Plants grow no taller than about 3 to 4 inches.

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**General Information**

Scientific name: *Aptenia cordifolia*  
Pronunciation: ap-TEE-nee-uh kor-dif-FOLE-ee-uh  
Common name(s): baby sunrose, heartleaf iceplant  
Family: Aizoaceae  
Plant type: ground cover  
USDA hardiness zones: 10 through 11 (Figure 4)  
Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year-round  
Origin: native to Africa  
Invasive potential: Not considered a problem species at this time and may be recommended by UF/IFAS faculty (reassess in 10 years)  
Uses: hanging basket; cascading down a wall; ground cover; mass planting  
Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant.

![Figure 4. Shaded area represents potential planting range.](image)

**Description**

Height: 0 to ½ feet  
Spread: depends upon supporting structure  
Plant habit: prostrate (flat)  
Plant density: dense  
Growth rate: slow  
Texture: fine

**Foliage**

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite  
Leaf type: simple  
Leaf margin: entire  
Leaf shape: ovate  
Leaf venation: none, or difficult to see  
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: spring-flowering; 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 applicable  
Current year stem/twig color: green  
Current year stem/twig thickness: medium

**Culture**

Light requirement: plant grows in full sun  
Soil tolerances: acidic; slightly alkaline; sand; loam  
Drought tolerance: high  
Soil salt tolerance: 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  
Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests

**Use and Management**

More often grown in a hanging basket in well-drained media, its small stature and slow growth make it suited for a ground cover in a small landscape or rock garden. Locate it in front of an upright, grass or grass-like plant such as one of the ornamental grasses, African iris or spartina to make a stunning, contrasting combination.

Be sure to locate baby sunrose in the full sun, and keep the soil on the dry side once it becomes established to prevent root rot. It is best suited for a coastal landscape where wind and sandy soil keep the soil dry. A light fertilization two or three times during the year should be all the plant needs to maintain a good appearance. After watering plants in containers, be sure to allow the media to become fairly dry before the next irrigation. Established landscape plants...
should require little if any irrigation in most years. Do not plant in a landscape soil unless it is very well-drained.

**Design Considerations**

The low-growing habit and small leaves of the baby sunrose cover the ground in a thick, lush layer of green, perfect for filling in among other plants in the landscape. Simple forms and light or medium green foliage of companion plants will highlight the dark green glossy foliage of the sunrose. Clumping plants with upright form and larger textured leaves or strap-blade leaves would also contrast well with the matting, low-growing form. The mass of green works well with different flower colors, but bright and light colors will show the best next to the dark green foliage. Small- or medium-size flowers with simple forms will contrast with the small red flowers without adding too much detail.

**Pests and Diseases**

If soil is kept too moist, roots can rot, causing poor growth, chlorosis, and plant death.