Cuphea ignea Cigar Plant, Cigar Flower

Introduction

Year-round flowering, attractive small foliage and a neat, round shape help to make Cigar flower a nice addition to any landscape (Fig. 1). It is not readily available in quantity, but can occasionally be purchased at specialty garden centers. Plants grow no more than about 2-feet-tall and 3-feet-wide and will attract attention in the shrub or perennial border. Many stems arise near the base of the plant but they branch infrequently. Flowers are continually produced on new growth during the warm seasons in Florida. It can be used as an annual bedding plant elsewhere because frost kills it to the ground.

General Information

Scientific name: Cuphea ignea
Pronunciation: KOO-fee-uh IG-nee-uh
Common name(s): Cigar Plant, Cigar Flower
Family: Lythraceae
Plant type: shrub

USDA hardness zones: 9B through 11 (Fig. 2)
Planting month for zone 9: year round
Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round
Origin: not native to North America
Uses: container or above-ground planter; specimen; foundation; attracts hummingbirds
Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant

Figure 1. Cigar Plant.

2. Edward F. Gilman, professor, Environmental Horticulture Department, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, 32611.
Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**Description**

**Height:** 1 to 3 feet  
**Spread:** 2 to 3 feet  
**Plant habit:** round  
**Plant density:** dense  
**Growth rate:** moderate  
**Texture:** fine

**Foliage**

**Leaf arrangement:** opposite/subopposite  
**Leaf type:** simple  
**Leaf margin:** entire  
**Leaf shape:** elliptic (oval)  
**Leaf venation:** bowed  
**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:** elongated  
**Fruit length:** less than .5 inch  
**Fruit cover:** dry or hard  
**Fruit color:** unknown  
**Fruit characteristic:** inconspicuous and not showy

**Trunk and Branches**

**Trunk/bark/branches:** typically multi-trunked or clumping stems; not particularly showy  
**Current year stem/twig color:** reddish

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Current year stem/twig thickness: thin

**Culture**

**Light requirement:** plant grows in part shade/part sun

**Soil tolerances:** loam; acidic; clay; sand; alkaline

**Drought tolerance:** moderate

**Soil salt tolerances:** poor

**Plant spacing:** 36 to 60 inches

**Other**

**Roots:** usually not a problem

**Winter interest:** plant has winter interest due to unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter trunk, or winter flowers

**Outstanding plant:** plant has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more

**Invasive potential:** not known to be invasive

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

**Use and Management**

In central and south Florida, cut plants to the ground when warm weather returns in the spring. Plants can be cut back in other regions after danger of frost leaves the region in the spring. This stimulates fresh growth from the base of the plant and removes last years twigs.

A sunny or partially shaded location gives the best growth. Soils should be kept moist.

**Pests and Diseases**

Cigar flower resists most pest and diseases problems.

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