

Cuphea ignea Cigar Plant, Cigar Flower¹

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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.



Figure 1. Cigar Plant.

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 hardiness 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

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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

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.