**Hibiscus coccineus** Swamp Mallow

Edward F. Gilman

**Introduction**

The Scarlet Rose Mallow is a narrow, upright, herbaceous perennial that can reach a height of 4 to 8 feet (Fig. 1). The 5- to 6-inch-long leaves of this plant are palmately lobed into 3, 5, or 7 parts. These finger-like lobes are slender and have jagged teeth along their margins. Deep red flowers that are 5 to 6 inches wide appear in mid to late summer. These flowers are funnel form and occur on long axillary peduncles. There are 10 or more involucral bracts present on the flower. They are curved upward and are much shorter then the calyx lobes.

**General Information**

**Scientific name:** Hibiscus coccineus

**Pronunciation:** hye-BISS-kus kock-SIN-ee-us

**Common name(s):** Swamp-Mallow

**Family:** Malvaceae

**Plant type:** perennial; herbaceous

**USDA hardiness zones:** 8 through 10 (Fig. 2)

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Description

Height: 4 to 8 feet
Spread: 3 to 4 feet
Plant habit: upright
Plant density: open
Growth rate: fast
Texture: fine

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: lobed; serrate
Leaf shape: star-shaped
Leaf venation: palmate
Leaf type and persistence: deciduous
Leaf blade length: 4 to 8 inches

Leaf color: green
Fall color: no fall color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: red
Flower characteristic: summer flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: elongated
Fruit length: .5 to 1 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
Current year stem/twig color: reddish

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Current year stem/twig thickness: very thick

**Culture**

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

**Soil tolerances:** extended flooding; acidic; sand; loam; clay;

**Drought tolerance:** moderate

**Soil salt tolerances:** poor

**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

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

**Pest resistance:** very sensitive to one or more pests or diseases which can affect plant health or aesthetics

**Use and Management**

The Scarlet Rose Mallow is frequently used as a specimen and can be placed in a border. It may also be utilized around the edge of a pond or along a stream since this type site is similar to their native Georgia and Florida habitat.

Although the Scarlet Rose Mallow is native to wetland areas it is tolerant of somewhat drier soils. This plant requires a full sun or partial shade location in the landscape. Flowering and growth in the shade are poor.

Cultivars include: 'Lord Baltimore', deep red flowers.

*Hibiscus coccineus* can be propagated by seed or division.

**Pest and Diseases**

The Scarlet Rose Mallow may be occasionally bothered by a stalk borer. Grasshoppers also enjoy chewing the foliage and flower buds. This can spoil the flower display. Be prepared to provide control for this pest. I usually squash them between my hands in the evening as a means of mechanical control.

Figure 3. Foliage of swamp-Mallow