

## ***Pentas lanceolata* Pentas<sup>1</sup>**

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### **Introduction**

This upright evergreen shrub or tall perennial becomes 3 to 4 feet tall and is decorated throughout most of the year in hardiness zones 9 through 11 with many 3-inch-wide, dense clusters of long-tubed, star-shaped flowers (Fig. 1). Available in white, pink, red, and lavender, these blossoms are extremely popular with butterflies and are long-lasting as cut flowers. Hummingbirds enjoy the red-flowered selections. They often visit this flower sooner than any other in the garden. Plants fertilized regularly during the growing season will continue to grow and bloom all during the warm months. It grows year round in central and south Florida. Leaves and stems are covered with fine hairs, and leaves have prominent veins on the undersides.

### **General Information**

**Scientific name:** *Pentas lanceolata*

**Pronunciation:** PEN-tuss lan-see-oh-LAY-tuh

**Common name(s):** pentas

**Family:** *Rubinaceae*



**Figure 1.** Pentas

**Plant type:** perennial; herbaceous

**USDA hardiness zones:** 8B through 11 (Fig. 2)

**Planting month for zone 8:** May; Jun; Jul

**Planting month for zone 9:** Apr; May; Jun; Jul; Aug

**Planting month for zone 10 and 11:** Feb; Mar; Apr; May; Jun; Jul; Aug; Sep; Oct; Nov; Dec

**Origin:** not native to North America

**Uses:** container or above-ground planter; hanging basket; cut flowers; accent; attracts hummingbirds;

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**Figure 2.** Shaded area represents potential planting range.

attracts butterflies; hedge; small parking lot islands (< 100 square feet in size); medium-sized parking lot islands (100-200 square feet in size); large parking lot islands (> 200 square feet in size)

**Availability:** generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

### Description

**Height:** 2 to 3 feet

**Spread:** 2 to 3 feet

**Plant habit:** round

**Plant density:** dense

**Growth rate:** fast

**Texture:** medium

### Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** opposite/subopposite

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** entire

**Leaf shape:** ovate; obovate

**Leaf venation:** pinnate

**Leaf type and persistence:** semi-evergreen

**Leaf blade length:** 2 to 4 inches

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** not applicable

**Fall characteristic:** not applicable

### Flower

**Flower color:** pink; lavender; white; purple

**Flower characteristic:** spring flowering; summer flowering; fall flowering; flower season is longer in zones 9-11

### Fruit

**Fruit shape:** no fruit

**Fruit length:** no fruit

**Fruit cover:** no fruit

**Fruit color:** not applicable

**Fruit characteristic:** inconspicuous and not showy

### Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/bark/branches:** usually with one stem/trunk

**Current year stem/twig color:** green

**Current year stem/twig thickness:** medium

### Culture

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

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

**Drought tolerance:** moderate

**Soil salt tolerances:** 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

Plants can be clipped as a hedge but flower production will suffer. They are best left unclipped so flowers are free to develop on new growth. Flowers last 3 to 5 days after they are cut and brought indoors. Plant on 18- to 24-inch centers for mass plantings.

Tolerant of a wide range of soil types, pentas prefers fertile, well-drained soils, regular moisture, and will grow quickly in full sun or light shade. Plants will flower fairly well with as little as 2 to 3 hours of sun each day. Plants can be dug, cut back, and stored in a container of soil over the winter in climates that receive freezing temperatures. Water occasionally to keep roots from drying out and

re-plant and fertilize in the spring. Heavy mulch applied over the crown of plants cut back to the ground will help plants overwinter in hardiness zone 8. In most years, plants re-grow from the partially buried stems in the spring.

Dwarf cultivars are available that grow to about 14 inches tall. Propagation is by softwood cuttings, which root easily in soil or water, or by seed.

### Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern, but occasionally mites. Caterpillars sometimes chew on the foliage.