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MAJOR FLORIDA CUT FOLIAGE CROPS CLASSIFIED ACCORDING TO FLORAL DESIGN AND LANDSCAPE USAGE

ROBERT H. STAMPS
University of Florida, IFAS
Central Florida Research and Education Center—Apopka
2807 Binion Road, Apopka, FL 32703

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Abstract. **Major Florida commercial cut foliage crops were classified according to their geometric shape and usage (line, mass, form, filler) to make it easier to understand how the foliage from these crops can be used in floral designs. Similarly, these crops were classified according to their form (growth habit when being commercially harvested) and landscape usage (hedge, specimen, ground cover, etc.) to facilitate the task of site selection and planning.**

Florida is the world's largest supplier of cut foliage (florists' greens) and produces a variety of crops (3). These commercially produced cut foliages, like cut flowers, can be classified according to their geometric shape and usage (line, mass, form, filler). This classification can make it easier to understand how the foliage from these crops can be used in floral designs. Similarly, classification of cut foliage crops according to their form (growth habit when being commercially harvested) and landscape usage (hedge, specimen, ground cover, etc.) facilitates the task of site selection and planning. Additionally, in-state florists and homeowners can combine this information to establish dual purpose (landscape and floral) plantings of these crops.

Table 1. Floral design uses of major cut foliage crops commercially produced in Florida.

Plant name		Design classification	Some uses	Colors available
Scientific	Common			
Asparagus densiflorus 'Sprengeri'	Sprengeri fern	Filler, line	Funeral designs, wedding decorations, garlands, table decorations	Green
A. macowanii	Ming fern	Filler, form	Flower arrangements	Green
A. setaceus (*A. plumosa*)	Plumosus fern	Filler	Funeral sprays, wedding decorations, garlands	Green
A. virgatus	Tree fern	Filler	Bud vases, table arrangements	Green
Aspidistra elatior	Cast-iron plant	Line	Funeral sprays, large arrangements	Green, green/white variegated
Codiaeum variegatum	Croton	Form, mass, line	Wedding bouquets, corsages (use with care as juices stain), flower arrangements	Red, yellow, green, black, pink, orange
Eucalyptus spp.	Eucalyptus	Line, filler	Dried and fresh arrangements	Green, blue
Euonymus japonica	Euonymus	Line, filler	Flower arrangements	Green, green/yellow variegated
Hedera helix	English ivy	Line, filler	Bouquets, table decorations, corsages	Green, green/yellow and green/white variegated
Ligustrum spp.	Privet	Line, filler	Table arrangements, funeral designs, corsages	Green, green/yellow and green/white variegated
Nephrolepis spp.	Sword fern	Line	Flower arrangements	Green
Pittosporum tobira	Mock orange	Mass, filler, line	Bouquets, table arrangements, bud vases	Green, green/white variegated
Podocarpus spp.	Podo, nagi	Filler, line	Table arrangements, funeral designs, bud vases (nagi)	Green
Rumohra adiantiformis	Leatherleaf, Baker fern	Filler	Bouquets, corsages, table arrangements, bud vases	Green
Serenoa repens	Palm	Form	Funeral designs, large arrangements	Green, bluish-gray

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Table 2. Landscape characteristics of major cut foliage crops commercially produced in Florida.

Plant name		Growth habit	Landscape use
Scientific	Common		
Asparagus densiflorus 'Sprengeri'	Sprengeri fern	Semi-woody vine	Ground cover, hanging baskets, planters
A. macowanii	Ming fern	Woody, upright to 6', clump forming	Specimen, planters, ground cover in shade
A. setaceus (*A. plumosa*)	Plumosus fern	Semi-woody, vining	Ground cover in shade, hanging baskets
A. virgatus	Tree fern	Herbaceous, upright	None
Aspidistra elatior	Cast-iron plant	Herbaceous, upright to 3', spreads slowly	Ground cover in heavy shade
Codiaeum variegatum	Croton	Shrub to 10'	Accent plant, specimen, planters
Eucalyptus spp.	Eucalyptus	Evergreen trees	Specimen
Euonymus japonica	Euonymus	Evergreen shrub	Hedge, planter specimen
Hedera helix	English ivy	Perennial woody vine	Ground cover in the shade, hanging baskets, planters, wall cover
Ligustrum spp.	Privet	Evergreen shrubs or small trees, upright	Hedges, specimen trees
Nephrolepis spp.	Sword fern	Spreading fern, fronds upright to 5'	Ground cover, hanging baskets
Pittosporum tobira	Mock orange	Compact evergreen shrub	Foundation plantings, hedge
Podocarpus spp.	Podo, nagi	Evergreen trees and shrubs	Accent plant, hedge, specimen
Rumohra adiantiformis	Leatherleaf, Baker fern	Spreading fern, fronds upright to 3'	Dense ground cover
Serenoa repens	Palm	Short (to 20') colonial palm, multiple trunks	Accent planting for naturalistic effect

Floral Design Classification

Floral designers often classify design elements (foliage and flowers) into four categories (1, 2) as follows:

1) *Line (linear) materials*—Narrow elongate materials such as aspidistra leaves, ligustrum stems and liatris flower spikes. Line materials often establish the framework (size and shape) for a floral design.
2) *Mass materials*—Broad, round materials like individual croton (*Codiaeum*) leaves or football chrysanthemum flowers. Mass materials are used singly and in groups as focal points of arrangements and are frequently used towards the center of a design.
3) *Filler materials*—Generally inexpensive, many-branched materials. The various ornamental asparagus species and baby's breath (*Gypsophila*) are examples from this group. Filler materials can be used to tie the other elements of a design together, to soften the appearance of an arrangement, to extend design lines and in many other ways.
4) *Form materials*—Distinctive shapes or coloring characterize this group. Palm (*Serenoa*) and croton leaves, and cattleya orchid flowers are commonly used form materials. Form materials are usually the focal points of arrangements and should not be crowded by other design elements.

Table 1 lists some floral design uses of the major commercial cut foliage crops currently produced in Florida. Other uses are possible and are limited to a large extent only by the designer's imagination.

Landscape Characteristics

Most of the cut foliage crops grown commercially in Florida, besides having desirable characteristics for floral use, are good candidates for use in maintained landscapes-even those in confined areas. None of these plants get very tall under normal harvesting practices. Indeed, only a few (*Ligustrum, Podocarpus* and *Eucalyptus*) have the potential to become trees and these are kept short to facilitate harvesting and maintenance, and to maintain juvenility of foliage in the case of *Eucalyptus*. However, many of these crops require shade during production to produce commercially acceptable foliage and will not tolerate sub-freezing temperatures (3, 4).

From delicate plumosus fern (*Asparagus setaceus*), the first cut foliage crop produced commercially in Florida, to rapidly growing eucalyptus trees, all of these crops are perennials. Table 2 lists landscape characteristics of these major Florida commercial cut foliage crops while references 3 and 4 list additional information on the cultural requirements of these plants.

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