

Successful Gardener

NC STATE UNIVERSITY NORTH CAROLINA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

Helping Carolinians Increase Their Knowledge of Gardening, Manage Their Landscape Investment & Protect the Environment

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JC Raulston Arboretum Plant Focus

Tibouchina: A Regal Shrub that Tolerates Drought

T*ibouchina urvilleana* (tib-oo-KYE-nuh er-vill-ee-AY-nuh) is native to Brazil and is commonly known as princess flower, glory bush, and purple glory bush. The princess flower is a versatile flowering evergreen shrub that can add interest to any landscape. It is ideal for a mixed border that includes shrubs and perennials, and it also works well in groupings of shrubs. Depending on how it is trained, this plant can demonstrate either a mounding shrub or small tree form. When mature, *T. urvilleana* reaches 10 to 15 feet high and 10 to 12 feet wide. It is fast growing and can be propagated by softwood cuttings and division of clumps.

The princess flower produces brilliant royal-purple flowers from May to January. The 3-inch diameter flowers have a fluorescent quality that is complemented by very attractive foliage. The large coarse leaves are 2 to 4 inches long and 1 to 1½ inches wide, with three to five major veins along the length of each leaf.

One of *T. urvilleana's* unique qualities is that it can display vivid flowering for several months of the year when provided full sun, well-drained soil and regularly watering. Another unique quality is its high drought tolerance. Its ability to survive periods of drought, however, comes at the expense of flower production. This shrub is most popular in frost-free areas of the world but will perform well in USDA hardiness zones 8 through 12. In zones that experience seasonal freezing temperatures, the princess flower will die back after a hard frost but return to bloom again in mid- to late-summer.

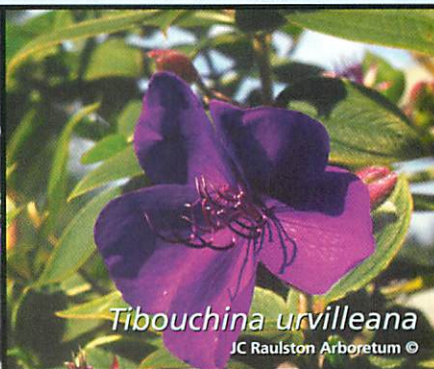
The princess flower could easily become your favorite flowering shrub. An ideal place to use this regal shrub would be near an outdoor living area where the flowers and foliage can easily be seen. Princess flower adds texture and interest to foundation and border plantings with enough color to grab the attention of anyone who passes by. As the popularity of this shrub increases, you may see other *Tibouchina* species make their way to your local nursery. **Scott Ewers**



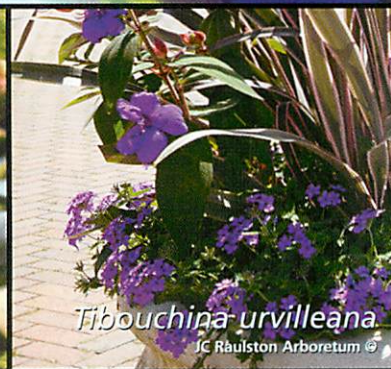
Tibouchina urvilleana
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Turf needs at least 50 percent sunlight to grow.



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Mulch can cover the shadiest areas.



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If the site is too shady for turf, get creative with groundcovers.

Turfgrasses for Shade

Trying to grow grass in areas with less than 50 percent sunlight or less than 4 hours of full sun each day is a losing battle. There are many plants that will grow in those conditions, including some that look like grasses. But turfgrasses simply will not grow in areas that receive less than 50 percent sunlight. Most turfgrasses prefer full sun but will grow moderately well in about 60 percent sunlight. Only certain shade-tolerant turfgrass cultivars will grow in those areas that receive between 50 and 60 percent sunlight.

The region where you garden will determine which turfgrass works best in low-light conditions. In the coastal plain, St. Augustinegrass will tolerate more shade than bermudagrass. In the piedmont and mountains, mixtures of tall fescue in combination with shade-tolerant cultivars of Kentucky bluegrass (80 percent and 20 percent by weight, respectively) will work, particularly where the lawn is fertilized properly. The addition of a fine fescue, specifically cultivars of hard fescue, is beneficial in lawns with less maintenance. A mixture of 80 percent tall fescue, 10 percent Kentucky bluegrass, and 10 percent hard fescue by weight seeded at 6 pounds per 1,000 square feet is recommended.

Most turfgrasses prefer full sun but will grow moderately well in about 60 percent sunlight.

Other fine fescues, such as certain cultivars of creeping red and chewing fescues that perform well under low light in other states, are thinned by disease in North Carolina. Perennial ryegrass and Sabre rough bluegrass have also performed poorly in shade trials in North Carolina.

Choosing the correct species and cultivar of turfgrass is only the first step. As they grow, trees constantly increase the amount of shade they cast. A partially shaded area is just a few growing seasons from becoming fully shaded. Removing trees and limbs will help reduce the amount of shade. Raise the tree's crown to at least 6 feet and preferably more.

Mowing at the correct height will help the plant collect more sunlight. Tall fescue and bluegrass blends should be cut at 4 inches, and St. Augustinegrass should be cut at 3 inches.

Finally, woodchip and bark mulches don't mind the shade. Increasing the amount of mulched area around a tree typically covers the worst performing part of the lawn. Plus this gives you the satisfaction of working with nature instead of against it. For more information about growing turfgrasses, visit N.C. State's turfgrass Web site: <http://www.turffiles.ncsu.edu/>. **David Goforth**

Alternative Fall Annuals

Adding fall color to the landscape can be a challenge for those burned out by the heat of the summer. There is hope, however, for gardeners who want more diversity of color in their landscape than pansies or garden mums.

Nurserymen are recommending frost-proof annuals that normally grow during the summer as sources of fall color. Growers have learned from their customers that geraniums, Million Bells® (*Calibracoa*) and certain petunia varieties can withstand light frosts and actually produce more blooms during the fall than traditional pansies. As temperatures begin to fall, these annuals set flowers profusely until a hard winter frost.

Snapdragon, verbena and gazania can also

add sparks of color that last well into the early winter. Dianthus is another typical bedding plant that comes alive with fall color. Use these annuals with fall-blooming perennial plants, such as sedums and ornamental grasses. Ornamental grasses provide a wide array of textures and colors that enliven the landscape.

Don't forsake pansies. New varieties of pansies still provide a perfect splash of fall and winter color. And violas, which are actually smaller species of the same genus that includes the pansy, bloom quicker and have more blooms per plant with more longevity than a typical pansy plant.

Darrell Blackwelder

Q&A Does Anything Kill Nutsedge?

The most cost-efficient options for killing nutsedge may be hand-weeding or using a hoe or shovel. Nutsedge re-grows from tubers (“nuts”) in the ground after it dies back during cool weather. One way to get rid of it is to remove the tubers, which can be as deep as 14 inches but are often less than half this deep. Dig up the tubers with a hoe or shovel while the plants are young or during the dormant season, if you can remember where the infestation is. Plants produce new tubers when they have five to six leaves, so remove the old tubers before this stage. If you remove only the leaves, do so every two to three weeks so that plants never reach the five- to six-leaf stage. Tilling nutsedge-infested areas can spread the tubers. If tilling is done frequently enough that plants never

reach the five- to six-leaf stage, tuber formation can be prevented.

A common herbicide that kills nutsedge is glyphosate (Roundup® and other brands). Among selective herbicides (ones that kill only certain plants), halosulfuron-methyl is probably the most versatile. It is contained in products for vegetables (Sanda®) and turf and ornamentals (Sedgehammer™). Other options are products containing bentazon (yellow nutsedge), EPTC, imazaquin (purple nutsedge), MSMA, pelargonic acid, sulfentrazone and sulfosulfuron. Read the label before buying any product containing these ingredients to make sure it is compatible with other plants growing where it will be used. Most of these chemicals can be safely and legally used only on certain plants. The label explains how to use them effectively.

Mary Ferguson

Alternative Fall Annuals



ENVIRO-TIP Capture the Rain

A rainwater harvesting system captures runoff, often from a rooftop, and stores the water for uses that don't require treated drinking water. This helps to reduce the demand on municipal water and sustain drinking water supplies. A rainwater harvesting system can be used to water gardens when water restrictions prevent the use of municipal water for irrigation. Rainwater harvesting also helps the environment by capturing nutrients and other pollutants from rooftop runoff, which keeps them from entering nearby streams. And the nutrients in rooftop runoff, such as nitrogen and phosphorus, can help plants grow when the captured water is used for irrigation.

A rain barrel is one way to capture rooftop runoff. Much more water can be captured and stored with a rainwater harvesting system that includes a cistern or water storage tank. The cistern must be selected and located

based on anticipated water needs. A gutter system collects runoff and directs it to the cistern, an overflow pipe allows excess runoff to leave the cistern, and an outlet pipe (sometimes connected to a pump) draws water from the cistern for use.

Learn about all of these components and how they work together before installing a rainwater harvesting system. Local plumbing codes can affect the installation, and some maintenance will be needed. A new Cooperative Extension online publication provides guidance for homeowners: <http://www.bae.ncsu.edu/stormwater/PublicationFiles/WaterHarvestHomes2008.pdf>.

This Enviro-tip is based on Extension publication AGW-588-11 by Matthew Jones and William Hunt in the Department of Biological and Agricultural Engineering at N.C. State University.



Gardentalk



“But a lazy September sunlight gilds the paper as I write, and the air is heavy with dreams. One would say that there is a drug even in the flickering powder which the bees are stirring, in the purple hearts of the flowers outside my window.”

*Beverly Nichols
Down the Garden Path
(1932)*



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Gardening in September

Lawns

- Seed cool-season grasses, such as fescue and bluegrass, this month.
- Fertilize cool-season grasses with 1 pound of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet. To prevent winter injury, avoid late summer and fall applications of nitrogen on warm-season grasses.

Ornamentals

- Do not prune or fertilize your trees and shrubs now. They are preparing for winter dormancy. Pruning and fertilizing will disrupt the process.
- Now is the time to plan for next year's spring-flowering bulbs. Browse catalogs and place spring bulb orders. Do not plant bulbs in September. Wait for the arrival of cooler weather in October and November.

- Fall is for planting trees and shrubs. N.C.

Cooperative Extension has many publications online and in print that can help you with planting trees and shrubs and other fall gardening tasks. For a list of what's available, visit this Web site: <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/Publications/lawngarden.php>.

- You may also set out cool-weather annuals for winter color. Do not forget to plant your fall chrysanthemums to welcome in the season.

Edibles

- Spray nectarine, plum, and peach trees for the peachtree borer. Pay close attention to spraying the lowest set of branches and down the trunk to the soil line.

- Plant cool-season vegetables, such as cabbage, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, collards, lettuce and kale. For an accurate planting schedule, consult Extension's Home Vegetable Gardening Web site: <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/hil/pdf/ag-06.pdf>.

Diane Turner

Hobbit Garden

The Hobbit Garden in Raleigh was originally located in historic Oakwood on a 1/8-acre lot. In 1995, the garden was transported to its new home on 9400 Sauls Road and expanded to 1 1/4 acres. This residential garden was created by its owners, John Dilley and Willie Pilkington, to provide year-round interest. They spent years collecting plants from all over the world and trying them in their garden. When their first garden was established in 1980, the plant selections available here primarily consisted of azaleas and camellias. When word got out about the plants growing in the Hobbit Garden, people began requesting tours. The Garden is open to the public by appointment with 72 hours of advance notice. Small group tours (1 to 4 individuals) are available on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. Reservations for large group tours (5 or more people) can be made for any day except holidays. For more information, e-mail hobbitgarden@att.net.

Michelle Wallace

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