

ORANGE BLAZING VINES MAKE A SHOW

By Ralph E. Mitchell

Some plants come to our attention only when they are in flower. This may be once a year or for a season, but the display is memorable and appreciated. When plants are not in flower however, they tend to be blend into the background. Consider the Flame Vine which is in bloom now or will be in bloom soon; a dazzling explosion of orange color! But, once the flower show is over, the vine is pretty much nondescript. Also consider the Mexican Flame Vine and the Orange Flame Vine - somewhat similar names with different-shaped orange flowers and periods of bloom. While these orange-flowering vines can be easily confused with each, they make a blazing floral display in their time with vines that, in some cases, can outgrow their bounds.

You cannot miss the Flame Vine or *Pyrostegia venusta* as it provides a splash of color in the



landscape like no other. The orange flowers are tubular in shape and 2-3 inches long. Clusters of up to 20 of these flowers are common with the tip of the flower opening into four petals. The flowers

are the good news about this vine. The bad news is that this plant is an aggressive grower that can, uncontrolled, cover fences, trees, shrubs and even telephone poles with tendrils that grab onto



anything that offers support. Growing in sun to part shade, pruning after flowering will not only help restrain the growth, but also helps develop more flowers throughout the entire plant. Unless you are willing to take responsibility to maintain this plant within the boundaries of a trellis or arbor, it is probably best to admire from safe distance. Although I don't see it noted in the Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council's 2007 List of Invasive Plant Species, it is mentioned in the University of Florida Center for Aquatic and Invasive Plants website being noted as an aggressive plant that can escape cultivation.

Another orange flowering vine that is sometimes confused with the Flame Vine is the Mexican Flame Vine or *Pseudogynoxys chenopodioides*. Another quickly growing vine, the flowers are very different and actually remind you of orange daisies. Not flowering much until spring, and summer, the Mexican Flame Vine flowers are orange-red with golden centers. For a slightly different look, there is a cultivar called 'Sao Paulo' that has almost brick red flowers. Often grown on fences, a trellis or even up a palm trunk, this vine has even been grown as a groundcover or cascading down a wall. Again, I did not notice this plant listed on the Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council's 2007 List of Invasive Plant Species. However it is an aggressive grower best confined to a fence or trellis to curb its enthusiastic nature.

As mentioned before, common names can be confusing, but scientific names help with more precise identification. One final orange-flowering vine that can be grown in our area is the Orange Flame Vine also known as *Combretum fruticosum*. A summer and early fall bloomer, this fast-growing yet less aggressive vine has delicate almost fuzzy, brush-like, orange flowers. Although called a vine, the Orange Flame Vine can be trained into a shrub, an espalier or even a standard form.

The Flame Vine, the Mexican Flame Vine, and the Orange Flame Vine - all are orange-flowering and vines, but all are different. Enjoy their orange splendor and understand their nature.

For more information on all types of flowering vines, please contact our Master Gardeners on the Plant Lifeline at 941.764.4340 from 1:00pm-4:00pm Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Our office is located at 25550 Harbor View Road, Suite 3, in Port Charlotte. Our **Plant Clinics** are available across the county:

- **Demonstration Garden (6900 Florida Street, PG)** Thursdays 9:00am-11:00am.
- **Englewood/Charlotte Public Library** Thursdays 10:00am-1:00pm.
- **Mid-County Regional Library** 1st and 3rd Thursday of month 1:00pm-3:00pm.
- **Edison College Learning Resources Library** 3rd Tuesday of month 1:00pm-4:00pm.
- **South Gulf Cove Learning Garden** 3rd Wednesday of month 9:00am-12:00pm.

Monthly **Plant Clinics** are Saturdays 9:00am-12:00pm at the following locations:

- **Peachland Promenades Publix** 2nd Saturday of month.
- **Home Depot Murdock & Home Depot Punta Gorda** 3rd Saturday of month.
- **Lowes Garden Center Murdock** 4th Saturday of month.

Ralph Mitchell is the County Extension Director/Horticulture Agent for the Charlotte County Cooperative Extension Service. You may contact him by email (Ralph.Mitchell@charlottefl.com). You may also contact a volunteer Master Gardener 1:00pm-4:00pm Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at 941.764.4340 or by email (Master.Gardener@charlottefl.com).

For more information about our Florida Yards and Neighborhoods Program, please contact our FYN Horticulture Program Assistant, Allison Steele, at 941.764.4340. Allison can help educate you about the Florida Yards & Neighborhoods Program so that you can create a beautiful, Florida-Friendly landscape that saves you time and money while conserving precious water resources and reducing pollution.

Resource:

Culbert, D. (2004) Colorful Flame Vines. UF/IFAS Okeechobee County Extension Service.

*Gilman, E.F. (1999) *Pyrostegia venusta*. UF/IFAS Extension Service.*

*Gilman, E.F. (1999) *Combretum fruticosum*. UF/IFAS Extension Service.*

*Gilman, E.F. (1999) *Senecio confusus*. UF/IFAS Extension Service.*

Park, S.P. (2007) & Knox, G. W. Flowering Vines for Florida. UF/IFAS Extension Service.

*University of Florida, Center for Aquatic and Invasive Plants - Wunderlin, (1998) *Pyrostegia venusta*. UF/IFAS.*