

## ULTIMATE PURPLE

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By Ralph E. Mitchell

My favorite color is green followed by purple. So, a purple flower in the landscape always catches my eye. While there may be various shades of purple, royal purple really makes an impact. Flowering woody shrubs called Tibouchina, natives of Brazil, produce such flowers. Various types of Tibouchina are available from dwarf to a 20-foot-tall small tree.

If you want a really short Tibouchina, then you want the Dwarf Tibouchina. The Dwarf Tibouchina can be used as a groundcover for small areas as it grows flat to the ground and is less than six inches in height. Also useful as a subject for a hanging basket, this plant will work as a border planting, or placed to cascade over a wall. Plant the Dwarf Tibouchina in full sun about 18 inches apart. Although it flowers throughout the summer and fall, it is not as showy as the other upright varieties of Tibouchina mentioned further on in this article.

Another more popular Tibouchina is *Tibouchina urvilleana* or Princess-Flower. The Princess flower is used as a large shrub, a small tree, a hedge material, in a container or even trained as an espalier on a trellis or an arbor. The red-edged, velvety leaves are a backdrop for the intense royal purple three to five-inch flower blooms that occur in abundance from May to January and on and off the rest of the year. Best in full sun, the Princess-Flower is hardy for our area. It

can grow almost too abundantly, so training and pruning will keep this shrub in bounds and neat in form.

A final Tibouchina to consider is *Tibouchina granulosa*, which grows a bit taller than the Princess-Flower. *Tibouchina granulosa*, or Purple Glory Tree, lives up to its name and grows up to 20 feet tall and wide with vivid purple flowers held above the foliage. Pruning will help develop a strong, upright trunk and keep the lower branches from drooping to the ground. With this and all Tibouchina species, make sure not to keep the soil too wet as root rots can develop.



*Princess Flower (Tibouchina urvilleana)*  
Jack Scheper (c) 2004 Floridata.com

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Thankfully, many *Tibouchina* species are readily available at local garden centers and nurseries. If you are looking for the ultimate purple flower, *Tibouchina* is the plant! For more information on all types of flowering shrubs suitable for our area, 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:

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

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

- **Englewood/Charlotte Public Library** 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday of month.
- **Peachland Promenades Publix** - 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of month.
- **Home Depot Murdock & Home Depot Punta Gorda** - 3<sup>rd</sup> 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](mailto: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](mailto: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.

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*Resource:*

*Gilman, E.F. (1999) Tibouchina spp. The University of Florida Extension Service, IFAS.*

*Gilman, E.F. & Watson, D.G. (2003) Tibouchina urvilleana: Princess-Flower. The University of Florida Extension Service, IFAS.*

*Gilman, E.F. (1999) Tibouchina granulosa: Princess-Flower. The University of Florida Extension Service, IFAS.*

*Scheper, J. (2005) Tibouchina urvillean. www.floridata.com.*