

THE PEREGRINA

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REM-08192009-032

Do you have a **peregrina** or **Jatropha integerrima** in your yard? I see many peregrina, also known as the spicy jatropha or “Fire-cracker”, in area landscapes these days for good reason. This small flowering shrub has brilliant red flowers almost all year round. Generally not growing much more than 15 feet tall, the peregrina is a shrub with great ornamental quality and ease of maintenance.

Depending on your perspective and pruning techniques, peregrina is considered either a small tree or a large shrub. Originally a native plant from Cuba, peregrina has interesting mix of fiddle-shaped, oblong or otherwise lobed leaves, and one-inch bright ruby-red flowers that develop into clusters above the foliage making them clearly visible and eye-catching. Butterflies such as monarchs, swallowtails, and zebras also love these blooms and accordingly peregrina is a must for butterfly gardens. Hummingbirds are also known to visit these flowers. While red is the most common color, pink is sometimes available in the horticulture trade. There is also occasionally available a compact smaller form known as ‘Compacta’. The individual flowers are star-shaped and only female flowers form seed capsules. A caution about this plant and these seed capsules - all parts of this plant are poisonous, so be careful when considering the use of this plant in the landscape if children and pets are present.

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Jatropha integerrima



wikipedia.org

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August 19, 2009

The peregrina can be grown as a specimen, as a patio plant or grown in a container. Many gardeners like to train this shrub into a standard, single-trunk plant. Planting in a full-sun location will provide the best environment for flowering. New plants are easily grown from seeds or propagated from cuttings.

Another closely related jatropha is called the **coral plant** or **Jatropha multifida**. Similar, but different in appearance, this Mexican native plant is also considered poisonous. The flower clusters in this plant form a flat circle of coral-red blossoms. Besides the flowers, the leaves of the coral plant are very exotic and noteworthy. The deeply dissected umbrella-like foliage gives this

plant a distinctive tropical look. Used as a specimen plant or even in a succulent garden, coral plants can be grown from seed or cuttings.

Both of these Jatrophas are easy to maintain once established. While not very salt tolerant, they are both considered fairly drought tolerant and best planted in well-drained soil. There are no major pest problems other than minor problems with mealy bugs, mites and scale insects.

Resources:

- Gilman, G.F. & Watson, D.G. (2003) *Jatropha integririma: Peregrina*. UF/IFAS Extension Service.
- Culbert, D. (2006) *Plant Jatropha for Dependable Color*. Okeechobee County UF/IFAS Extension Service.
- Christman, S. (2003) *Jatropha integerrima*. Tallahassee, Florida – Floridata.
- Christman, S. (2003) *Jatropha multifida*. Tallahassee, Florida – Floridata.

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