

# **THE FRINGE BUSH – A DAZZLING AND COLORFUL SHRUB**

A relatively new shrub to our area is the Fringe bush. Just like many plants, there are a variety of names for this shrub including the Chinese fringe bush, the Chinese Witch Hazel, Fringe flower or Loropetalum. The flowers do remind me of Witch Hazel, but in this article, for the purposes of simplicity, I am going to call this plant the Fringe bush. The flowers are unique, delicate and frilly and come in red, pink or white colors. Although a new shrub, I see them commonly available at many local garden centers and installed in a number of Charlotte County landscapes. Is a fringe bush in your future?

If you are looking for an ornamental, medium-sized shrub, the fringe bush should fit the bill! While depending on the variety, this shrub can grow up to 10 feet tall, but it is more commonly seen in the four to six foot high range. The evergreen foliage is green in white flowering types, and reddish in those cultivars that bloom red or pink. The branches of the fringe bush are spreading and uniquely arranged in layers. Overall, this bush is wider than it is tall. With careful pruning or selection of shorter varieties, you can actually use the fringe bush as a groundcover. Other uses for the fringe bush can include as a hedge, a border shrub, as a single specimen, or even as a trained espalier. While preferring an acid soil, this shrub can adapt to a more alkaline condition. If your soil is very alkaline, applications of minor elements can help supplement those nutrients locked up in the soil due to the high pH. The fringe bush is very hardy for our area and can be considered drought tolerant once established. Choose a well-drained, partially shaded location for a planting site. A site with dappled

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*Photo: Terry DeValle, Duval County UF/IFAS Extension Service.*

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light has been found to provide very good results with the fringe bush in our area.

If you have found a good site for a fringe bush planting, selection of cultivars is next. Availability of varieties will vary, but the following types and descriptions will give you an idea of what to look for. Keep in mind that you can consider both flower and foliage color when choosing. 'Rubra' and 'Razzeleberri' are two red-flowering types that are often available. 'Burgundy', which is also known as 'Sizzling Pink', has burgundy foliage and pink flowers. 'Burgundy' is a large variety that can grow up to fourteen feet tall. 'Plum Delight™' or 'Pizzazz' is another similarly pigmented fringe bush. 'Blush' is slightly different with green leaves and pink flowers growing only four to six feet tall. Dwarf to prostrate forms can also be found including 'Purple Pixie', 'Snow Mound' and

'Chang's Ruby'. Expect flowering to occur in our area mostly in late winter, but also on and off throughout the year.

There have been some problems associated with a variety called 'Ruby'. This cultivar had shown some signs of decline including stunted leaves, deformation, leaf curling, defoliation, and even the death of the plant, in the central part of Florida. This decline was connected to a nutrient deficiency linked to the element copper.

Keep pruning to a minimum. Taller types can be worked into small trees with time, but normal maintenance pruning should be limited to dead and out of bound branches to keep individual shrubs from becoming leggy.

Otherwise, if you have not seen the fringe shrub in bloom, it is a dazzling and different shrub suitable to many landscapes.

#### Resources:

- Gilman, E.F. (2007) *Loropetalum chinensis* Chinese Fringe Bush. UF/IFAS Extension Service.
- Shober, A.L. & Leibee, G.L. (2007) *Strategies to Control Loropetalum Decline in Central Florida*. UF/IFAS Extension Service.
- Culbert, D. (2009) *Razzle them with Chinese Fringe Bush*. Okeechobee County UF/IFAS Extension Service.
- Scheper, J. (2004) *Loropetalum chinensis*. Florida, Tallahassee, Florida.

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