**Pentas lanceolata Pentas**¹
Edward F. Gilman and Suzanne Shiffit²

---

### Introduction

This upright evergreen shrub or tall perennial becomes 3 to 4 feet tall and is decorated throughout most of the year in hardiness zones 9 through 11 with many 3-inch-wide, dense clusters of long-tubed, star-shaped flowers (Fig. 1). Available in white, pink, red, and lavender, these blossoms are extremely popular with butterflies and are long-lasting as cut flowers. Hummingbirds enjoy the red-flowered selections. They often visit this flower sooner than any other in the garden. Plants fertilized regularly during the growing season will continue to grow and bloom all during the warm months. It grows year round in central and south Florida. Leaves and stems are covered with fine hairs, and leaves have prominent veins on the undersides.

---

### General Information

**Scientific name:** *Pentas lanceolata*  
**Pronunciation:** PEN-tuss lan-see-oh-LAY-tuh  
**Common name(s):** pentas

**Family:** Rubiaceae  
**Plant type:** perennial; herbaceous  
**USDA hardiness zones:** 8B through 11 (Fig. 2)  
**Planting month for zone 8:** May; Jun; Jul  
**Planting month for zone 9:** Apr; May; Jun; Jul; Aug  
**Planting month for zone 10 and 11:** Feb; Mar; Apr; May; Jun; Jul; Aug; Sep; Oct; Nov; Dec  
**Origin:** not native to North America  
**Uses:** container or above-ground planter; hanging basket; cut flowers; accent; attracts hummingbirds; attracts butterflies; hedge; small parking lot islands (< 100 square feet in size); medium-sized parking lot islands (100-200 square feet in size); large parking lot islands (> 200 square feet in size)  
**Availability:** generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

---

1. This document is FPS465, one of a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, UF/IFAS Extension. Original publication date October 1999. Reviewed February 2014. Visit the EDIS website at [http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu](http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu).
2. Edward F. Gilman, professor, Environmental Horticulture Department; and Suzanne Shiffit, program assistant, horticultural programs, UF/IFAS Extension Marion County; UF/IFAS Extension, Gainesville, FL 32611.

---

The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) is an Equal Opportunity Institution authorized to provide research, educational information and other services only to individuals and institutions that function with non-discrimination with respect to race, creed, color, religion, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, national origin, political opinions or affiliations. For more information on obtaining other UF/IFAS Extension publications, contact your county’s UF/IFAS Extension office.

U.S. Department of Agriculture, UF/IFAS Extension Service, University of Florida, IFAS, Florida A & M University Cooperative Extension Program, and Boards of County Commissioners Cooperating. Nick T. Place, dean for UF/IFAS Extension.
**Description**

Height: 2 to 3 feet  
Spread: 2 to 3 feet  
Plant habit: round  
Plant density: dense  
Growth rate: fast  
Texture: medium

**Foliage**

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite  
Leaf type: simple  
Leaf margin: entire  
Leaf shape: ovate; obovate  
Leaf venation: pinnate  
Leaf type and persistence: semi-evergreen  
Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches  
Leaf color: green  
Fall color: not applicable  
Fall characteristic: not applicable

**Flower**

Flower color: pink; lavender; white; purple  
Flower characteristic: spring flowering; summer flowering; fall flowering; flower season is longer in zones 9–11

**Fruit**

Fruit shape: no fruit  
Fruit length: no fruit  
Fruit cover: no fruit  
Fruit color: not applicable  
Fruit characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

**Trunk and Branches**

Trunk/bark/branches: usually with one stem/trunk  
Current year stem/twig color: green  
Current year stem/twig thickness: medium

**Culture**

Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun  
Soil tolerances: clay; sand; acidic; loam  
Drought tolerance: moderate  
Soil salt tolerances: unknown  
Plant spacing: 18 to 24 inches

**Other**

Roots: not applicable  
Winter interest: no special winter interest  
Outstanding plant: not particularly outstanding  
Invasive potential: not known to be invasive

---

*Pentas lanceolata Pentas*

**Pest resistance:** long-term health usually not affected by pests

**Use and Management**

Plants can be clipped as a hedge but flower production will suffer. They are best left unclipped so flowers are free to develop on new growth. Flowers last 3 to 5 days after they are cut and brought indoors. Plant on 18- to 24-inch centers for mass plantings.

Tolerant of a wide range of soil types, pentas prefers fertile, well-drained soils, regular moisture, and will grow quickly in full sun or light shade. Plants will flower fairly well with as little as 2 to 3 hours of sun each day. Plants can be dug, cut back, and stored in a container of soil over the winter in climates that receive freezing temperatures. Water occasionally to keep roots from drying out and re-plant and fertilize in the spring. Heavy mulch applied over the crown of plants cut back to the ground will help plants overwinter in hardiness zone 8. In most years, plants re-grow from the partially buried stems in the spring.

Dwarf cultivars are available that grow to about 14 inches tall. Propagation is by softwood cuttings, which root easily in soil or water, or by seed.

**Pests and Diseases**

No pests or diseases are of major concern, but occasionally mites.

Caterpillars sometimes chew on the foliage.