**Plumbago auriculata** Plumbago, Cape Plumbago, Sky Flower

Edward F. Gilman

**Introduction**

This sprawling, mounding, somewhat vine-like, evergreen shrub is quite outstanding because it is covered most of the year with clusters of pale blue, phlox-like flowers (Fig. 1). Plumbago is excellent as a foundation planting or when used in planters. It will cascade down a retaining wall, showing off the unusual blue flowers. It has also been sheared into a hedge, but most of the flowers are removed at each pruning.

**General Information**

**Scientific name:** *Plumbago auriculata*

**Pronunciation:** plum-BAY-go ah-rick-yoo-LAY-tuh

**Common name(s):** plumbago, cape plumbago, sky flower

**Family:** Plumbaginaceae

**Plant type:** shrub

**USDA hardness zones:** 9 through 11 (Fig. 2)

**Planting month for zone 9:** year round

**Planting month for zone 10 and 11:** year round

**Origin:** not native to North America

**Uses:** border; mass planting; container or above-ground planter; hedge; attracts butterflies

**Availability:** generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

**Description**

**Height:** 6 to 10 feet

**Spread:** 8 to 10 feet

**Plant habit:** spreading; round

**Plant density:** moderate

**Growth rate:** fast

**Texture:** fine

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**Foliage**
- Leaf arrangement: alternate
- Leaf type: simple
- Leaf margin: undulate
- Leaf shape: oblong
- Leaf venation: brachidodrome
- Leaf type and persistence: evergreen
- Leaf blade length: less than 2 inches
- Leaf color: green
- Fall color: no fall color change
- Fall characteristic: not showy

**Flower**
- Flower color: blue
- Flower characteristic: year-round flowering; pleasant fragrance

**Fruit**
- Fruit shape: elongated
- Fruit length: less than .5 inch
- Fruit cover: dry or hard
- Fruit color: brown
- Fruit characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

**Trunk and Branches**
- Trunk/bark/branches: not particularly showy; typically multi-trunked or clumping stems
- Current year stem/twig color: green
- Current year stem/twig thickness: thin

**Culture**
- Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun
- Soil tolerances: clay; sand; acidic; loam; slightly alkaline
- Drought tolerance: moderate
- Soil salt tolerances: unknown
- Plant spacing: 36 to 60 inches

**Use and Management**

Needling full sun for best growth and flowering, plumbago will grow on any fertile, well-drained soil, becoming drought-tolerant once established. Leaves may yellow on soils with a high pH, indicating mineral deficiency. Plumbago responds well to an application or two of fertilizer during the growing season to encourage continuous growth and flowering. Excessive growth can be removed at any time of year.

Plants in north-central Florida quickly recover in the spring following a killing freeze. Allow four to six feet between plants in a mass planting so that the natural cascading, fountain shape will develop. Plumbago also looks attractive as a specimen if located in a low ground cover.

The variety ‘Alba’ has white flowers.

Propagation is by seed, cuttings, or division.

**Pests and Diseases**

Pest problems include cottony cushion scale and mites.

No diseases are of major concern.