**Ruellia brittoniana** Mexican Bluebell¹

Edward F. Gilman²

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**Introduction**

Mexican bluebell is an upright or spreading perennial that is known as a strong grower under adverse conditions (Fig. 1). This 18- to 30-inch-tall plant has light green leaves that are medium in texture. Blue, violet, red or pink flowers appear on this perennial in the spring, summer and fall. These flowers are showy, and their nectar is appealing to various species of butterflies. Plants can grow into small flowering shrubs in the warmest parts of south Florida where freezes do not occur.

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**General Information**

**Scientific name:** *Ruellia brittoniana*

**Pronunciation:** roo-EL-lee-uh brit-TOE-nee-uh

**Common name(s):** Mexican bluebell

**Family:** Acanthaceae

**Plant type:** perennial; herbaceous

**USDA hardiness zones:** 8B through 11 (Fig. 2)

**Planting month for zone 8:** year round

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

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

**Origin:** not native to North America

**Uses:** ground cover; mass planting; attracts butterflies

**Availability:** grown in small quantities by a small number of nurseries

![Figure 1. Mexican bluebell.](image)

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**Description**

**Height:** 2 to 3 feet

**Spread:** 1 to 2 feet

**Plant habit:** spreading; upright

**Plant density:** moderate

**Growth rate:** moderate

**Texture:** fine

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2. Edward F. Gilman, professor, Environmental Horticulture Department; UF/IFAS Extension, Gainesville, FL 32611.

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Ruellia brittoniana Mexican Bluebell

Foliage
Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: entire
Leaf shape: linear
Leaf venation: parallel
Leaf type and persistence: deciduous
Leaf blade length: 8 to 12 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: no fall color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower
Flower color: blue; violet; red; pink
Flower characteristic: spring flowering; summer flowering; fall flowering

Fruit
Fruit shape: unknown
Fruit length: unknown
Fruit cover: unknown
Fruit color: unknown
Fruit characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

Trunk and Branches
Trunk/bark/branches: typically multi-trunked or clumping stems
Current year stem/twig color: reddish
Current year stem/twig thickness: thin

Culture
Light requirement: plant grows in the shade
Soil tolerances: occasionally wet; acidic; sand; loam; clay
Drought tolerance: moderate
Soil salt tolerances: poor
Plant spacing: 24 to 36 inches

Other
Roots: sprouts from roots or lower trunk
Winter interest: no special winter interest
Outstanding plant: not particularly outstanding
Invasive potential: not known to be invasive
Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests

Use and Management
Mexican bluebell may be used as ground covers and in perennial borders. They are attractive when massed together or planted in a container where flexible stems droop over the pot.

Place Ruellia in an area of the landscape that receives full to partial shade. These species will grow best in well-drained soils and are very drought and salt tolerant. Ruellia species will be frozen to the ground in the winter but regrowth should occur from the roots.

These plants may be propagated by seed or cuttings. Ruellia can become invasive, as it readily reseeds itself.

Pests and Diseases
No pests or diseases are of major concern.