

Hoya carnosia Wax Plant, Wax Flower¹

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Introduction

This slow-growing, woody, evergreen vine has thick, fleshy, two to four-inch-long, green or variegated leaves, and produces in spring and summer large, round, hanging clusters of creamy white to light pink, 0.5-inch, fragrant flowers, each with a perfect five-pointed pink star in the center (Fig. 1). Bloom fragrance is subtle and you must come close to the plant to enjoy it but it is well worth the effort. These long-lasting, showy blooms emerge on old flower spurs, which should never be pruned off. Because wax plant is especially sensitive to nematodes, plants are often grown in containers where the soil can be carefully controlled. Wax plant is very susceptible to temperatures below 40°F and should be used in sheltered locations.



Figure 1. Wax plant.

General Information

Scientific name: *Hoya carnosia*

Pronunciation: HOY-yuh kar-NOE-suh

Common name(s): wax plant, wax flower

Family: *Asclepiadaceae*

Plant type: vine

USDA hardiness zones: 10B through 11 (Fig. 2)

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: hanging basket; suitable for growing indoors; cascading down a wall

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



Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Description

Height: depends upon supporting structure

Spread: depends upon supporting structure

Plant habit: spreading

Plant density: open

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Growth rate: slow

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: ovate

Leaf venation: pinnate; none, or difficult to see

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen

Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches

Leaf color: variegated

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: pink

Flower characteristic: pleasant fragrance; spring flowering; summer flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: pod or pod-like

Fruit length: less than .5 inch

Fruit cover: dry or hard

Fruit color: unknown

Fruit characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: not applicable

Current year stem/twig color: green

Current year stem/twig thickness: thick

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun

Soil tolerances: slightly alkaline; clay; sand; acidic; loam

Drought tolerance: high

Soil salt tolerances: poor

Plant spacing: 18 to 24 inches

Other

Roots: not applicable

Winter interest: no special winter interest

Outstanding plant: plant has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more

Invasive potential: not known to be invasive

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

Use and Management

Wax plant should be grown in partial shade in a fibrous, well-drained, acid potting medium, such as compost, peat, or sphagnum moss. Plants should be allowed to dry between deep waterings in the summer months then, after flowering, plants should be allowed to become dormant by very infrequent waterings during the cool months. This plant is well-suited for growing in a container with an extremely well-drained media where stems can cascade over the side and show off the waxy foliage and unusual bloom.

Available cultivars include: 'Variegata'—white-margined leaves; 'Exotica'—leaves variegated with yellow and pink, margined with green; and 'Krinkle Kurl' or Hindu-Rope Plant—leaves crowded, curled, and contorted.

Propagation is by cuttings or layering.

Pests and Diseases

Nematodes and mealy-bugs.

Root-rots if kept too wet.