

Senecio confusus Mexican Flame Vine¹

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Introduction

This twining, evergreen sprawling vine has four-inch-long, coarsely toothed, dark green leaves and terminal clusters of orange-red, one-inch, daisy-like flowers with golden centers (Fig. 1). Although it appears throughout the year, peak periods of bloom are spring and summer. The quick growth of Mexican flame vine is ideal to add interest to palm trunks, to soften fences, or to veil a trellis. Occasional heading helps some foliage and flowers at the bottom of a fence or other structure supporting Mexican flame vine. Left unpruned, foliage and flowers accumulate at the top.



Figure 1. Mexican flame vine

General Information

Scientific name: *Senecio confusus*

Pronunciation: sen-NEESH-shee-oh kun-FEW-sus

Common name(s): Mexican flame vine

Family: *Compositae*

Plant type: ground cover

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

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round

Origin: native to North America

Uses: ground cover; cascading down a wall

Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant



Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Description

Height: depends upon supporting structure

Spread: depends upon supporting structure

Plant habit: spreading

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Plant density: moderate
Growth rate: fast
Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: dentate
Leaf shape: ovate
Leaf venation: pinnate
Leaf type and persistence: evergreen
Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: no fall color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: orange-red
Flower characteristic: summer flowering



Figure 3. Flower of Mexican flame vine

Fruit

Fruit shape: oval
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 applicable
Current year stem/twig color: green
Current year stem/twig thickness: medium

Culture

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

Other

Roots: not applicable
Winter interest: no special winter interest
Outstanding plant: not particularly outstanding
Invasive potential: aggressive, spreading plant
Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests

Use and Management

Easily grown in full sun or partial shade, Mexican flame vine thrives in any soil with little care. Although knocked down by frost, it will quickly recover in USDA hardiness zones 8b and 9. Growth rate is so rapid, it can be used as an annual vine, planting yearly in areas subjected to freezing winter temperatures.

The cultivar 'Sao Paulo' has deeper orange, almost brick red flowers.

Propagation is by seed or stem cuttings. The green, fleshy stems will root at the nodes when in contact with soil.

Pests and Diseases

Nematodes, mites, scales, and caterpillars all bother Mexican flame vine.

No diseases are of major concern.