Introduction

This rapidly-growing annual is noted for its brilliantly colored foliage, variegated in shades of red, green, or yellow (Figure 1). Joseph's coat will reach 1 to 4 feet in height. The beautiful leaves are 3 to 6 inches long and 2 to 4 inches wide. Joseph's coat is ideal for edgings, borders, or mass plantings, where its vivid coloration will attract attention. It is one of the only annuals striking enough to be planted as a specimen.

General Information

Scientific name: Amaranthus tricolor  
Pronunciation: am-uh-RANTH-us TRY-kull-lur  
Common name(s): Joseph's coat amaranth, fountain plant, love-lies-bleeding  
Family: Amaranthaceae  
Plant type: annual  
USDA hardiness zones: all zones (Figure 2)  
Planting month for zone 7: Jun  
Planting month for zone 8: May  
Planting month for zone 9: Apr  
Planting month for zone 10 and 11: Dec; Jan; Feb  
Origin: not native to North America  
Uses: container or above-ground planter; specimen; border; accent
Amaranthus tricolor Joseph's Coat Amaranth, Fountain Plant

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

**Description**

Height: 1 to 4 feet  
Spread: 1 to 2 feet  
Plant habit: upright  
Plant density: moderate  
Growth rate: fast  
Texture: coarse

**Foliage**

Leaf arrangement: alternate  
Leaf type: simple  
Leaf margin: undulate  
Leaf shape: ovate  
Leaf venation: pinnate  
Leaf type and persistence: not applicable  
Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches  
Leaf color: yellow; purple or red; variegated  
Fall color: not applicable  
Fall characteristic: not applicable

**Flower**

Flower color: red  
Flower characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

**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: not applicable  
Current year stem/twig color: reddish  
Current year stem/twig thickness: very thick

**Culture**

Light requirement: plant grows in full sun  
Soil tolerances: clay; sand; acidic; loam  
Drought tolerance: moderate  
Soil salt tolerance: unknown  
Plant spacing: 12 to 18 inches

**Other**

Roots: not applicable

**Use and Management**

Plants should be placed in full sun for best leaf color, but can tolerate partial shade in the hottest locations. Any well drained soil is fine and plants are quite drought-tolerant. Joseph's coat will perform best where they do not receive too much fertilizer since the leaves will lose their vibrant coloring when grown in very rich soils. Plants usually need staking to hold them upright.

Cultivars include ‘Early Splendor,’ ‘Flaming Fountain,’ ‘Molten Fire,’ ‘Perfecta,’ ‘Splendens,’ and ‘Tricolor’ which have various brilliant shades of yellow to red foliage. ‘Green Thumb’ and ‘Pigmy Touch’ are more compact and may not need staking.

A related plant called A. hybridus is considered useful for reducing tissue swelling and have a cleansing effect. It has also been used for diarrhea, ulcers and hemorrhaging.

Propagation is by seed which germinates readily.

**Pests and Diseases**

None of major concern.