

Pachystachys lutea Golden Shrimp Plant¹

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Introduction

The golden shrimp plant is a colorful, soft-stemmed, tropical shrub typically massed in beds or maintained as a background plant in a mixed perennial planting (Fig. 1). This 36- to 48-inch-tall, upright perennial has dark green, ovate leaves that are 6 inches long. The showy inflorescence consists of a congested raceme of bright yellow bracts from among which pure white flowers emerge over several weeks. Flowers are displayed above the foliage and contrast nicely with the dark green canopy. New inflorescence are produced throughout the warm months.



Figure 1. Golden shrimp plant

General Information

Scientific name: *Pachystachys lutea*

Pronunciation: puh-KISS-tuh-kiss LOO-tee-uh

Common name(s): golden shrimp plant, yellow shrimp plant

Family: *Acanthaceae*

Plant type: shrub

USDA hardiness zones: 9B 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: hedge; foundation; border; mass planting

Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range



Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Description

Height: 2 to 3 feet

Spread: 2 to 3 feet

Plant habit: oval

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Plant density: dense
Growth rate: moderate
Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: undulate
Leaf shape: spatulate
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: white
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; not particularly showy
Current year stem/twig color: green
Current year stem/twig thickness: medium

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun
Soil tolerances: acidic; slightly alkaline; sand; loam; clay
Soil salt tolerances: poor
Plant spacing: 24 to 36 inches

Other

Roots: usually not a problem
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: very sensitive to one or more pests or diseases which can affect plant health or aesthetics

Use and Management

The golden shrimp plant requires full sun to partial shade and fertile, acidix, well-drained soils. The plant should only be expected to successfully overwinter without damage in zones 10 and 11. In zone 9b, the tops will be killed in a severe freeze but regrowth should occur from the roots. Elsewhere it can be used as an annual. Even where this perennial remains unscathed by winter frosts, it should be pruned back hard annually to overcome a tendency toward legginess. Plant a lowgrowing ground cover nearby to fill in the lower part of the plant. Golden shrimp plant can be effectively maintained in a container. Regular fertilization during the growing season helps keep foliage green.

Golden shrimp plant is easily propagated from softwood and semi-ripened cuttings and begins to flower when less than 1 foot tall.

Pests and Diseases

Scales and spider mites may be troublesome pests for the shrimp plant.