

Zebrina pendula Wandering Jew¹

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Introduction

It would be difficult to find a more colorful or faster-growing groundcover than wandering Jew (Fig. 1). The purple-green leaves with broad, silvery stripes and purple undersides are produced along the succulent stems, which root wherever they touch soil. Rapidly creating a thick, 6- to 12-inch-high mat of colorful foliage, a groundcover of wandering Jew will easily hide fallen litter from trees growing above it. Stems root as they touch the ground. Small, insignificant, rose-pink flowers are produced among the leaves of wandering Jew all through the year.

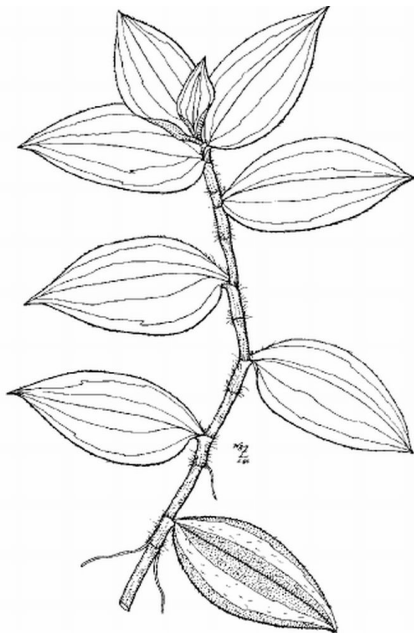


Figure 1. Wandering Jew

General Information

Scientific name: *Zebrina pendula*

Pronunciation: zee-BRYE-nuh PEND-yoo-luh

Common name(s): wandering Jew

Family: *Commelinaceae*

Plant type: herbaceous; ground cover

USDA hardiness zones: 9 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: container or above-ground planter; ground cover; naturalizing; hanging basket; suitable for growing indoors; cascading down a wall

Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range



Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

1. This document is FPS-620, one of a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, UF/IFAS Extension. Original publication date October 1999. Reviewed February 2014. Visit the EDIS website at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.
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Description

Height: .5 to 1 feet
Spread: depends upon supporting structure
Plant habit: prostrate (flat); spreading
Plant density: moderate
Growth rate: fast
Texture: fine

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: entire
Leaf shape: ovate
Leaf venation: bowed
Leaf type and persistence: evergreen
Leaf blade length: less than 2 inches
Leaf color: purple or red; variegated
Fall color: no fall color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: pink
Flower characteristic: flowers periodically throughout the year

Fruit

Fruit shape: oval
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: reddish
Current year stem/twig thickness: medium

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in the shade
Soil tolerances: slightly alkaline; occasionally wet; clay; sand; acidic; loam
Drought tolerance: moderate
Soil salt tolerances: poor
Plant spacing: 18 to 24 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

Wandering Jew will grow in a variety of soils but should be planted in partial to deep shade and receive regular waterings. Plants have marginal salt-tolerance.

The cultivar 'Purpusii' has dark red or red-green, unstriped, hairy leaves. 'Quadricolor' has metallic-green leaves striped with green, red, and white. There is also a green and white cultivar available.

Propagation is by stem cuttings, which root easily.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern, but it is occasionally bothered by mites.