

Coleus x hybridus Coleus¹

Edward F. Gilman, Teresa Howe, Ryan W. Klein, and Gail Hansen²

Introduction

Although coleus does flower, it is grown for its brightly colored leaves. The plant grows in sun to partial shade and requires a lot of water. Coleus reaches 20 to 24 inches tall but trailing types can be used in hanging pots. Pinch young plants or older, leggy plants to encourage branching for a fuller plant. Coleus may be used as a potted plant indoors in a sunny window or outdoors in part sun. They are sometimes planted en masse on 12 to 18 inch centers to add a splash of bright color to any landscape. A mass planting looks nice with a backdrop of green shrubs. Remove flower spikes as they appear to encourage more foliage growth. Cold wet soils and poor cultural practices can result in leaf drop.



Figure 2. Leaf - *Coleus x hybridus*: Coleus
Credits: Edward F. Gilman, UF/IFAS



Figure 1. Full Form - *Coleus x hybridus*: Coleus
Credits: Edward F. Gilman, UF/IFAS



Figure 3. Flower - *Coleus x hybridus*: Coleus
Credits: Edward F. Gilman, UF/IFAS

1. This document is FPS136, one of a series of the Department of Environmental Horticulture, UF/IFAS Extension. Original publication date October 1999. October 2023. Visit the EDIS website at <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu> for the currently supported version of this publication.
2. Edward F. Gilman, professor, Department of Environmental Horticulture, Teresa Howe, coordinator, Research Programs/Services, UF/IFAS Gulf Coast Research and Education Center, UF/IFAS Extension, Gainesville, FL 32611.

The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) is an Equal Opportunity Institution authorized to provide research, educational information and other services only to individuals and institutions that function with non-discrimination with respect to race, creed, color, religion, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, national origin, political opinions or affiliations. For more information on obtaining other UF/IFAS Extension publications, contact your county's UF/IFAS Extension office. U.S. Department of Agriculture, UF/IFAS Extension Service, University of Florida, IFAS, Florida A & M University Cooperative Extension Program, and Boards of County Commissioners Cooperating. Andra Johnson, dean for UF/IFAS Extension.

General Information

Scientific name: *Coleus x hybridus*

Pronunciation: KOE-lee-us x HYE-brid-us

Common name(s): coleus

Family: *Labiatae*

Plant type: annual

USDA hardiness zones: all zones (Figure 4)

Planting month for zone 7: Jun; Jul; Aug

Planting month for zone 8: May; Jun; Jul; Aug

Planting month for zone 9: Mar; Apr; May; Jun; Jul; Aug; Sep; Oct

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: Mar; Apr; May; Jun; Jul; Aug; Sep; Oct

Origin: not native to North America

Invasive potential: not known to be invasive

Uses: mass planting; container or above-ground planter; edging; accent

Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range



Figure 4. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Description

Height: 1 to 3 feet

Spread: 1 to 3 feet

Plant habit: round

Plant density: dense

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: crenate; lobed; undulate

Leaf shape: ovate

Leaf venation: bowed

Leaf type and persistence: not applicable

Leaf blade length: 4 to 8 inches

Leaf color: yellow; green; variegated

Fall color: not applicable

Fall characteristic: not applicable

Flower

Flower color: blue

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: green

Current year stem/twig thickness: very thick

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun

Soil tolerances: clay; sand; acidic; loam

Soil salt tolerances: unknown

Plant spacing: 12 to 18 inches

Other

Roots: not applicable

Winter interest: not applicable

Outstanding plant: not particularly outstanding

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

Use and Management

Coleus is propagated by seed and cuttings. Cuttings as short as two inches can be taken from newly grown shoots and rooted in plain water. The seed germinates in 10 to 14 days at 70°F to 75°F. Light stimulates germination so seed should not be covered. Set plants outside after the weather has warmed. In USDA hardiness zones 8 to 11, coleus can be set out spring through late summer. Winter plantings are successful in south Florida in the full sun provided adequate moisture is available.

Pest and Diseases

Mites cause the leaves to be puckered and distorted.