

Kalanchoe blossfeldiana Kalanchoe, Christmas Kalanchoe, Madagascar Widow's-thrill¹

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Introduction

Kalanchoe is a dark green, succulent perennial with scallop-edged leaves and large umbels of flower clusters held above the foliage. The upright, many-branched growth habit and tolerance of low moisture conditions makes it ideal for groundcover use, rock gardens, raised planters, or containers.

General Information

Scientific name: *Kalanchoe blossfeldiana*

Pronunciation: kal-lan-KOE-ee blossom-fel-dee-AY-nuh

Common name(s): kalanchoe, Christmas kalanchoe, Madagascar widow's-thrill

Family: *Crassulaceae*

Plant type: perennial; herbaceous

USDA hardiness zones: 10 through 11 (Figure 2)

Planting month for zone 7: Jun; Jul

Planting month for zone 8: Jun; Jul

Planting month for zone 9: Jun; Jul; Aug; Sep



Figure 1. Full Form—*Kalanchoe blossfeldiana*: Kalanchoe, Christmas kalanchoe, Madagascar widow's-thrill.
Credits: Edward F. Gilman, UF/IFAS

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Planting month for zone 10 and 11: Feb; Mar; Apr; Sep; Oct; Nov; Dec

Origin: native to Africa

Invasive potential: not considered a problem species at this time and may be recommended by UF/IFAS faculty (reassess in 10 years)

Uses: container or above-ground planter; edging; attracts hummingbirds

Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range



Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Description

Height: 0.5 to 1 feet

Spread: 0.5 to 1 feet

Plant habit: round

Plant density: moderate

Growth rate: slow

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: crenate

Leaf shape: oblong

Leaf venation: none, or difficult to see

Leaf type and persistence: not applicable

Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: not applicable

Fall characteristic: not applicable

Flower

Flower color: pink; red; yellow; salmon

Flower characteristic: winter flowering; spring flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: unknown

Fruit length: unknown

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: green

Current year stem/twig thickness: thick

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun

Soil tolerances: slightly alkaline; sand; acidic; loam

Drought tolerance: high

Soil salt tolerances: unknown

Plant spacing: 6 to 12 inches

Other

Roots: not applicable

Winter interest: plant has winter interest due to unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter trunk, or winter flowers

Outstanding plant: plant has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more

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

Use and Management

Growing in full sun to moderate shade, kalanchoe prefers light, sandy, open, well-drained soils and is moderately salt tolerant. Kalanchoe needs very little water and only one light application of fertilizer each year. Plants should be protected from frost. Plant on 8- to 12-inch centers for the best effect.

Flower colors are available in red, yellow, orange, and salmon. The cultivars 'Pumila' and 'Tetra Vulcan' are dwarf selections.

Kalanchoe is easily propagated by seed or leaf, stem, or tip cuttings. New plantlets will occasionally appear at leaf margins and may be removed and potted up individually.

Problems include caterpillars and mealy bugs.

Pests and Diseases

Leaf spotting diseases can be a problem under humid conditions.