

Peperomia obtusifolia Peperomia, Baby Rubber Plant¹

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Introduction

Peperomia has round, smooth, dark green leaves and short, somewhat brittle stems, seldom growing taller than 12 inches. Quickly growing into spreading clumps, peperomia is ideal for tropical groundcover use, as well as container culture or raised planters. It also makes a durable house-plant and will cascade over the side of a hanging basket.



Figure 1. Full Form - *Peperomia obtusifolia*: Peperomia, Baby Rubber Plant

Credits: Edward F. Gilman, UF/IFAS



Figure 2. Leaf - *Peperomia obtusifolia*: Peperomia, Baby Rubber Plant

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General Information

Scientific name: *Peperomia obtusifolia*

Pronunciation: pep-per-ROE-mee-uh
ob-too-siff-FOLE-leeuh

Common name(s): peperomia, baby rubber plant

Family: *Piperaceae*

Plant type: perennial; herbaceous

USDA hardiness zones: 10 through 11 (Figure 3)

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round

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Origin: native to Florida as well as tropical America and parts of the Caribbean

Invasive potential: not known to be invasive

Uses: container or above-ground planter; mass planting; naturalizing; suitable for growing indoors; cascading down a wall

Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range



Figure 3. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Description

Height: 0.5 to 1 feet

Spread: 1 to 2 feet

Plant habit: spreading

Plant density: open

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: coarse

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: obovate

Leaf venation: bowed

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen

Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches

Leaf color: variegated

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: white

Flower characteristic: flowers periodically throughout the year

Fruit

Fruit shape: oval

Fruit length: less than 0.5 inch

Fruit cover: fleshy

Fruit color: brown

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 the shade

Soil tolerances: slightly alkaline; clay; sand; acidic; loam

Drought tolerance: moderate

Soil salt tolerances: poor

Plant spacing: 24 to 36 inches

Other

Roots: not applicable

Winter interest: no special winter interest

Outstanding plant: not particularly outstanding

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

Use and Management

Growing in partial to deep shade, peperomia will thrive in moist, rich, organic soils or less fertile sandy soils. Although preferring high humidity, it must have well-drained conditions to avoid stem and root rot. Plant on 12 to 18 inch centers for quick establishment as a ground cover. It is best to err on the dry side when growing peperomia.

A few available cultivars include 'Alba', young growth entirely white-yellow, marked with bright red; 'Albomarginata', grey-green leaves with silvery border; 'Albomarginata Minima', dwarf form of the preceding; 'Minima', compact plant, leaves one to two inches long; and 'Variegata', grey-green blotched green leaves with a broad, creamy-white margin.

Propagation is by cuttings which root easily or by division.

Pests and Diseases

Peperomia's main pest problem is mites.

Peperomia is susceptible to stem and root rots and leaf spot diseases.