

Pilea cadierei Aluminum Plant¹

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

Introduction

The variegated foliage on aluminum plant is unlike any other, with shiny silver, irregularly shaped markings parallel to the lateral veins. Leaves are held opposite each other on square, green stems, producing a thick ground cover about 12 inches tall in a shaded landscape. Small, white flowers are produced at the ends of the stems in the summer, but they are mostly overshadowed by the conspicuous foliage.



Figure 1. Full Form - *Pilea cadierei*: Aluminum plant.
Credits: Edward F. Gilman, UF/IFAS



Figure 2. Leaf - *Pilea cadierei*: Aluminum plant.
Credits: Edward F. Gilman, UF/IFAS

General Information

Scientific name: *Pilea cadierei*

Pronunciation: PYE-lee-uh kuh-DEER-ree-eye

Common name(s): aluminum plant

Family: *Urticaceae*

Plant type: ground cover

USDA hardiness zones: 10 through 11 (Figure 3)

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year-round

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2. Edward F. Gilman, professor emeritus; Ryan W. Klein, assistant professor, arboriculture; and Gail Hansen, professor, sustainable landscape design; Department of Environmental Horticulture, UF/IFAS Extension, Gainesville, FL 32611.

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Origin: not native to North America

Invasive potential: aggressive, spreading plant

Uses: hanging basket; suitable for growing indoors; ground cover; 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: depends upon supporting structure

Plant habit: spreading

Plant density: moderate

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: serrate

Leaf shape: obovate

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen

Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches

Leaf color: silver/gray; variegated

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: white

Flower characteristic: summer 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: not applicable

Current year stem/twig color: green

Current year stem/twig thickness: medium

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in the shade

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

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

Pest resistance: very sensitive to one or more pests or diseases which can affect plant health or aesthetics

Use and Management

Aluminum plant forms a thick ground cover within 2 years after planting on 18-inch centers. Unrooted stems can be stuck into the ground and will root if kept moist in a shaded location. You can propagate the plant quickly in this manner. Locate the plant in a fully shaded location since foliage on aluminum plant will discolor in the sun. Provide for irrigation in dry weather and fertilize regularly to keep the plant thick and looking nice.

Pests and Diseases

Mites can spoil the foliage in hot, dry weather. Locate in the full shade to prevent this.