

Zebrina pendula Wandering Jew, Inchplant¹

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Introduction

It would be difficult to find a more colorful or faster-growing groundcover than wandering Jew. 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. Full Form—*Zebrina pendula*: Wandering Jew, inchplant.
Credits: Edward F. Gilman, UF/IFAS



Figure 2. Leaf—*Zebrina pendula*: Wandering Jew, inchplant.
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General Information

Scientific name: *Tradescantia pendula*

Pronunciation: trad-es-KAN-tee-ah PEND-yoo-luh

Common name(s): wandering Jew, inchplant

Family: *Commelinaceae*

Plant type: herbaceous; ground cover

USDA hardiness zones: 9 through 11 (Figure 3)

Planting month for zone 9: year-round

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Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year-round

Origin: native to North America and Mexico

Invasive potential: invasive and not recommended by UF/IFAS faculty (reassess in 10 years)

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 3. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Description

Height: 0.5 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 0.5 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

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.