

Jatropha integerrima: Peregrina¹

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Introduction

This slender-stemmed, multi-trunked tropical evergreen tree or large shrub, a native of Cuba, reaches 15 feet in height with an equal spread, and has unusual 3 to 6-inch-long leaves varying in shape from oblong, fiddle-shaped, or even-lobed. The 1-inch-wide bright red or pink flowers are produced year-round in beautiful clusters held upright above the foliage and helps make fire-cracker an interesting specimen plant. The seed capsules which follow hold several smooth, speckled, and toxic seeds, a fact which must be considered when placing this plant in the landscape; it should be kept out of the reach of children.

General Information

Scientific name: *Jatropha integerrima*

Pronunciation: jat-ROE-fuh in-teh-GAIR-rih-muh

Common name(s): peregrina, jatropha, fire-cracker

Family: *Euphorbiaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 10B through 11 (Fig. 6)

Origin: native to Cuba

UF/IFAS Invasive Assessment Status: not considered a problem species at this time, may be recommended (North, Central, South)

Uses: specimen; deck or patio; container or planter; trained as a standard; highway median



Figure 1. Full Form - *Jatropha integerrima*: peregrina
Credits: UF/IFAS

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Figure 2. Range

Description

Height: 10 to 15 feet
Spread: 10 to 15 feet
Crown uniformity: symmetrical
Crown shape: vase, round
Crown density: open
Growth rate: moderate
Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: lobed



Figure 3. Leaf - *Jatropha integerrima*: peregrina
 Credits: UF/IFAS

Leaf shape: oblong to obovate; 0-3-lobed with acuminate tips
Leaf venation: pinnate
Leaf type and persistence: broadleaf evergreen, evergreen
Leaf blade length: 3 to 6 inches
Leaf color: dark green and shiny of top, paler green underneath
Fall color: no color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: bright red or pink
Flower characteristics: showy; emerges in clusters on terminal cymes
Flowering: year-round



Figure 4. Flower - *Jatropha integerrima*: peregrina
 Credits: UF/IFAS

Fruit

Fruit shape: oval
Fruit length: ½ to 1 inch
Fruit covering: 6-lobed capsule that contains 3 smooth and spotted seeds
Fruit color: unknown
Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; not showy; fruit/leaves not a litter problem



Figure 5. Fruit - *Jatropha integerrima: peregrina*

Credits: UF/IFAS

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/branches: branches droop; not showy; typically multi-trunked; no thorns

Bark: gray brown and smooth, becoming textured with age

Pruning requirement: needed for strong structure



Figure 6. Bark - *Jatropha integerrima: peregrina*

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Breakage: resistant

Current year twig color: brown

Current year twig thickness: medium

Wood specific gravity: unknown

Culture

Light requirement: full sun to partial shade

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

well-drained

Drought tolerance: moderate

Aerosol salt tolerance: moderate

Soil salt tolerance: none

Other

Roots: not a problem

Winter interest: yes

Outstanding tree: yes

Invasive potential: little invasive potential

Ozone sensitivity: unknown

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: unknown

Pest resistance: resistant to pests/diseases

Use and Management

Jatropha makes a delightful red-flowered accent in a shrub border planted to attract attention to an area. It flowers nearly year-round and so is quite popular as a patio tree or garden accent. Multiple trunks and stems originate near the ground forming a symmetrical, weeping clump of thinly-clothed branches. The tree can be staked and trained to grow with one trunk for two or three feet. This is a nice way to display the plant as an accent or specimen. Do not expect this small tree to provide shade, but it will attract hummingbirds and butterflies.

Peregrina should be grown in full sun or partial shade on well-drained soil. Full sun plants flower best. It is not salt-tolerant.

There is a pink-flowered form available at some nurseries.

Propagation is by seed or cuttings.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern but occasionally bothered by mites, scales, and superficial leaf miner.

Reference

Koeser, A.K., Friedman, M.H., Hasing, G., Finley, H., Schelb, J. 2017. Trees: South Florida and the Keys. University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences.