



## **Firecracker Plant**

### ***Russelia equisetiformis***

#### **Introduction**

Firecracker Plant is a weeping shrub that, when in full bloom, looks as if it is raining flowers. These slender, red, tubular flowers appear in the summer and hang on the plant like little firecrackers during most of the year. The flowers occur in 12-inch-long sprays and are a delight to the onlooker. The slim and pendulous branches of this plant lack foliage; the leaves are reduced to bracts. However, the branches and bracts are of fine texture and have a very pleasant color. The fruit of Firecracker Plant are small, inconspicuous, and also hang in clusters.

#### **General Information**

Scientific name: *Russelia equisetiformis*

Pronunciation: russ-SEEL-lee-uh eck-kwiss-see-tiff-FORmiss

Common name(s): Firecracker Plant

Family: Scrophulariaceae

Plant type: shrub

USDA hardiness zones: 9B through 11

Planting month for zone 9: year round

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: specimen; foundation; border; mass planting; cascading down a wall; accent

Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

#### **Description**

Height: 3 to 5 feet

Spread: 6 to 12 feet

Plant habit: weeping

Plant density: moderate

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: fine

#### **Foliage**

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite

Leaf type: leaves rare

Leaf margin: dentate

Leaf shape: ovate

Leaf venation: none, or difficult to see  
Leaf type and persistence: evergreen  
Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches  
Leaf color: green  
Fall color: no fall color change  
Fall characteristic: not showy

### **Flower**

Flower color: red  
Flower characteristic: year-round flowering

### **Fruit**

Fruit shape: oval  
Fruit length: less than .5 inch  
Fruit cover: dry or hard  
Fruit color: brown  
Fruit characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

### **Trunk and Branches**

Trunk/bark/branches: typically multi-trunked or clumping stems; not particularly showy  
Current year stem/twig color: green  
Current year stem/twig thickness: thin

### **Culture**

Light requirement: plant grows in full sun  
Soil tolerances: acidic; alkaline; sand; loam; clay;  
Drought tolerance: high  
Soil salt tolerances: good  
Plant spacing: 36 to 60 inches

### **Other**

Roots: usually not a problem  
Winter interest: no special winter interest  
Outstanding plant: not particularly outstanding  
Invasive potential: aggressive, spreading plant  
Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests

### **Use and Management**

This 4-foot-high shrub can be used as an unclipped hedge if there is enough space to accommodate its wide spreading habit. It is also useful as a tall ground cover. It is quite charming in a container or large hanging basket and is lovely when cascading over a wall. Branches droop several feet down the side of a container. The Firecracker Plant is tolerant of different types of soils as long as they are well-drained. It does require full sun for best flowering and fullest growth. Plants tolerate extended drought once established. Unfortunately, plants can escape cultivation and have been found forming thickets on

disturbed sites such as along roadsides and embankments. Propagation of Firecracker Plant is by simple layers and cuttings.

**Pests and Diseases**

*Russelia equisetiformis* is occasionally bothered by chewing insects, nematodes, and mites.

*by Edward F. Gilman*