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*