

Chocolate Plant, *Purple False Eranthemum*

GENERAL

Origin	: tropical
Vigour	: normal growth rate
Humidity	: semi-arid, semi-humid, very humid, extremely humid
Propagation	: cuttings
Maintenance	: low

CONDITIONS

Urban climate	: resistant
Dessication	: vulnerable
Stagnant water	: vulnerable
Irrigation	: high
Salinity/ppm	: moderate (1500 ppm)
Hardiness	: -3°C

SHAPE

Type	: shrub
Height	: 0.7 m-1.2 m
Spread	: 0.5 m-1 m
Foliage	: evergreen

FLOWER

Colour	: white, light purple
Size	: 2.5 cm
Period	: March - November

FRUIT

Type of fruit	: capsule
Fruit size	: 0.8 cm

The Chocolate Plant, while commonly more purple than chocolate-brown in colour, is an upright shrub, up to 1 metre high; it originates from Mexico. Owing to its attractive foliage, it is seen more and more in gardens and parks in Arriyadh. The dark-green, shiny, oval leaves are brightly coloured with red veins, and the undersides are purple. Also very often seen is the variegated form, *P. a. variegatum*, which has waxy-looking leaves in hues of pale grey-green, rose-pink and white. The spotted, tubular-shaped white, pink or purple flowers are borne on short, terminal spikes and bloom for most of the year. The plant grows best in bright, indirect sunlight, is fairly frost-resistant and prefers some humidity. *P. atropurpureum* requires a fertile, well-drained but moist or sandy, alkaline soil, and should be watered regularly. Plants require fertilising every few weeks during the spring and summer. Propagation is by greenwood or hardwood cuttings. Prone to spider mites; nematodes, scale and thrips can also be a problem. The Chocolate Plant is an attractive plant for patios, garden borders and containers. It can also be used in parks, mass-planted or grown as a low hedge. It requires only a little extra care to maintain its appearance.

