

Wingpod Purslane

GENERAL

Origin	: sub-tropical
Vigour	: normal growth rate
Humidity	: semi-arid, semi-humid, very humid
Propagation	: sowing and pricking out, direct sowing, layer

Maintenance	: high
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CONDITIONS

Urban climate	: resistant
Dessication	: resistant
Stagnant water	: vulnerable
Irrigation	: low
Salinity/ppm	: moderate (3000 ppm)
Hardiness	: 0°C

SHAPE

Type	: annual
Height	: 0.05 m-0.15 m
Spread	: 0.2 m-0.5 m
Foliage	: evergreen

FLOWER

Colour	: red, centre: yellow
Size	: 2 cm
Period	: April - August

FRUIT

Type of fruit	: capsule
Fruit size	: 0.5 cm

Purslane is a common annual herb, native to the southwestern United States, which is a somewhat weedy species of the desert at higher elevations. It is sometimes confused with *Portulaca oleracea*, or common Purslane; *P. umbraticola* is easily distinguished by the prominent margin on the fruit capsule. A succulent, low-growing prostrate plant up to 15 cm high, the leaves are green, linear in shape, and the ascending stems are fleshy, hairless and often reddish in colour. The red flowers are 2 cm across with rounded petals, yellow at their base. They are in bloom from spring to autumn, but are open only part of the day. A wide range of flower colours of cultivars are available: in the Yubi series, there are eight clear colours: white, yellow, light pink, pink, rose, red, scarlet and apricot. They are followed by seed capsules encircled by crown-like, pale green, translucent, wings. *P. umbraticola* thrives in hot, dry conditions and spreads rapidly to become 50 cm across. Plants will reseed themselves in late spring; they are killed by the first heavy frost. A slow-release fertiliser in mid-summer or fertilising every two weeks is necessary. Extremely drought-tolerant, they require only very moderate watering to look good. They will grow in either average to poor, well-drained garden soil in full sunlight. Maintenance is high with weeding and replacement: in midsummer, plants can be cut back by about 50 percent to encourage new growth and more flowers. When mass planted, *P. umbraticola* makes a dramatic impact in desert gardens.

