

Copper Leaf

On suitable sites, these shrubs create dense mounds of showy leaves while the flowers are insignificant. Copper Leafs grow fairly fast to about 2.5 metres in height. The plant originates in the islands of the southern Pacific, where it withstands a considerable amount of salinity and still makes a lush tropical feature. High levels of humus and nitrogen are as important, as is frequent irrigation without waterlogging. However, fertilisation should not be applied until the roots have been established. Wind exposure and low humidity may result in burnt margins on the plant's main asset – its gorgeous coloured foliage. Hues in bronze, purple and red make these shrubs an eye-catcher. Hardwood cuttings are the most common method for propagating the numerous cultivars. In spring, they root easily in mixtures of peat and perlite under some shelter to retain humidity. Varieties differ in the colour and shape of their foliage. To achieve a bushy shape, the tips of young plants should be pinched occasionally. In winter, they do well with less water. A range from full sun to partial shade is tolerated, but a lack of light makes the foliage colours fade. They grow fast enough to sometimes act as annuals in colder climates. As indoor plants, Copper Leafs develop better in soil-less potting mix that retains humidity yet drains well, and daily misting should compensate the lack of high rainfall, as in their homelands. Grown indoors, they are also susceptible to aphids, spider mites and scale insects.



GENERAL

Origin	: sub-tropical, tropical
Vigour	: fairly fast growing
Humidity	: semi-arid, semi-humid, very humid
Propagation	: cuttings
Maintenance	: moderate

CONDITIONS

Urban climate	: vulnerable
Dessication	: vulnerable
Stagnant water	: vulnerable
Irrigation	: medium
Salinity/ppm	: moderate (1500 ppm)
Hardiness	: +3°C

SHAPE

Type	: shrub
Height	: 2 m-3 m
Spread	: 2 m-3 m
Foliage	: evergreen

FLOWER

Colour	: pale pink
Size	: 10 cm - 20 cm
Period	: May - August

FRUIT

Type of fruit	: capsule
Fruit size	: 0.5 cm