

Joseph's Coat

GENERAL

Origin	: tropical
Vigour	: fast growing
Humidity	: semi-arid, very humid
Propagation	: sowing and pricking out, direct sowing
Maintenance	: high

CONDITIONS

Dessication	: resistant
Stagnant water	: vulnerable
Irrigation	: low
Salinity/ppm	: low (1000 ppm)
Hardiness	: 0°C

SHAPE

Type	: annual, biennial, perennial
Height	: 0.6 m-0.8 m
Spread	: 0.4 m-0.6 m
Foliage	: evergreen

FLOWER

Colour	: white, light green
Size	: 12 cm
Period	: April - May

FRUIT

Type of fruit	: capsule
Fruit size	: 0.2 cm
Toxicity	: edible when processed

The genus *Amaranthus* contains about 70 species, which are generally grown for their colourful, edible leaves and long pendulous flowers reminiscent of a fox's tail. The *Amaranthus* originate in tropical Asia, but are even to be found in Mexico in dry desert areas. In Arriyadh, a strain of *A. tricolor* with its dark red to purple leaves is often to be seen on farms, and, owing to its copious seed production and easy germination, the plants seem to have escaped their agricultural environment and now appear as ornamental plants in many places. Usually an erect, bushy annual with ovate, pointed to rounded leaves up to 5 cm long, the whitish-green flowers produce very small, black or red-brown seeds. These fast-growing plants can also be grown as perennials, requiring full sun to partial shade, and reach a height of 80 cm. Not very frost-hardy, they require water until establishment, but are otherwise quite drought-tolerant. Seed should be sown in spring in fertile, well-drained garden soil, although they will also do well on poor soils. Plants are subject to attacks by aphids. *Amaranthus* is used as a leaf vegetable, comparable to spinach: the leaves can be eaten raw or boiled and young stems can be served like asparagus. They also have medicinal properties and are rich in minerals and vitamins. As an ornamental in the garden with its attractive coloured leaves, *A. tricolor* makes a great impact in borders or in large planters.

