

Egyptian star cluster - *Pentas lanceolata*

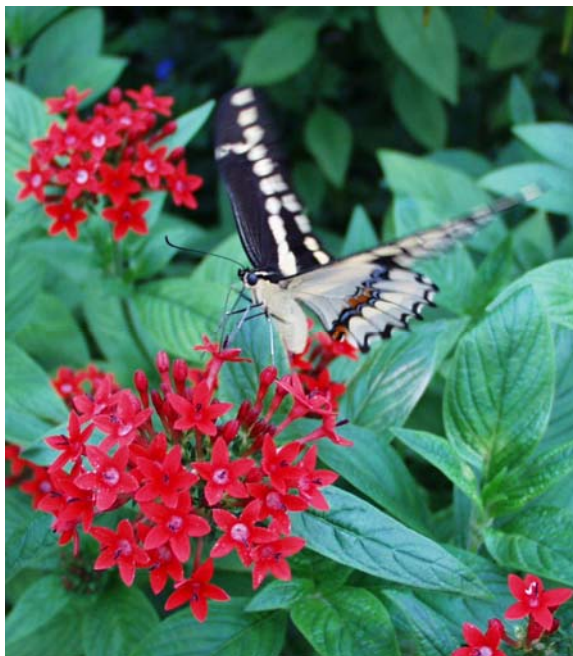
A butterfly and hummingbird favorite, this spectacular plant makes a great addition to the annual bedding palette. It's a multi-stemmed plant with three and a half inch blooms in a variety of striking colors; red, pink, white, lavender or purple. Pentas will thrive in the hot, humid summers of Texas and are sometimes perennial in mild, although not often.

"The 'Butterfly' and 'Graffiti' pentas series is one of the newest series of to be released in the past few years. 'Butterfly' pentas have proven an outstanding series in trials across the United States and are the first F1 hybrid pentas on the market. With its hybrid plant vigor, it produces larger flowers and umbels, withstands stressful conditions, and demonstrates better garden performance than other commercial varieties on the market today", according to James Spivey of the San Antonio Botanic Garden. The 'Graffiti' series are dense flowering, compact only growing to about 12" and need sun or light shade to flourish. As stated by Jimmy Turner of the Dallas Arboretum, the pink, violet, and red species do the best.



Red pentas and blue *Salvia guaranitica* is just one combination that guarantee visits by hummingbirds. Other combinations that will bring about visits from butterflies include lantana, mistflower, or pincushion flower. Cultivars of *Pentas lanceolata* come in a range of colors (mentioned above), but red appears to be the best butterfly attractor, and mixes well with any number seasonal annuals.

Regularly pinch back to back to maintain a compact habit and encourage the new growth and blooming. Remove deadheads as needed and fertilize lightly in late spring and summer. Pentas make an ideal container plant mixed with other low-growing perennials or annuals. So, if they are planted in containers, you should fertilize them more often. They prefer a well-drained soil or potting medium, rich in organic matter.



Propagation: Cuttings in spring and summer

Interesting Tidbits:

- Pentas are native to the eastern portion of tropical Africa and southern Arabia.
- It was originally named by George Bentham in the late 1800s, but the plant was not well-known until lately.
- Although there are 34 species of Pentas, only one is regularly cultivated for its ability to attract butterflies.