

Purslane - *Portulaca umbraticola* L.

Most people confuse these plants; is it portulaca or purslane? Well, both names are actually correct. However the plant that I will discuss is the Purslane, which is a single portulaca! It's a favorite annual of mine for the truly hot part of the summer, not only for the drought tolerance but for the extreme colors that the newer large-flowered varieties available. The large two inch blossoms are twice as large as the old-fashioned purslane (or hogweed as the weed is known for). The centers of the flowers expose the stamens and give a two-tone effect.

This plant thrives in hot, humid, dry conditions and spreads rapidly to 24" across and about 6" high. The trailing purslane is ideal for full-sun color beds, containers, and hanging baskets. The portulaca 'Yubi' Summer joy series has garnered a Texas SuperStar™ distinction. Which means that it has proven mettle in our Texas heat!

There are eight clear colors in the Yubi series: white, yellow, light pink, pink, rose, red, scarlet and apricot. The same company that introduced the Yubi series also brings us another group called Duet. The Duet has two varieties available: Yellow on Rose and Red on Yellow. These bi-colored moss roses are very striking and should prove to be popular with consumers.

Bloom time: Spring through fall but only during the day, flowers close at night and re-open after 3 hours of sun. They will self-sow, that is "go to seed" so dead-head for minimal spread.

For best results, plant in spring or summer in full sun in either average to poor garden soil that has good drainage. growing transplants and space them 6 to 8 inches apart in a bed with well-drained soil and full sunlight. Purslane do not like wet feet or water-logged soil. After it is established in a bed, it is one of the top drought-tolerant plants. Apply a slow release fertilizer like 14-14-14 in mid-summer or fertilize bi-weekly with 20-20-20 water-soluble mix. Water sparingly, and no other care is needed. About midsummer cut back the plants by about 50 percent and fertilize. This will give you a new flush of growth, tighten up your bed and produce more dazzling flowers.

When mass planted, single-colored portulacas like Yubi, the landscape impact becomes dramatic, especially considering the iridescent color combinations.

Annual bed idea: Pair the purslane Bengal Tiger canna in the back, followed by Victoria Blue salvia, then the bright yellow Yubi. Or plant with orange lantana.

Interesting Tidbits:

- Purslane are edible. It has a tart, lemony taste, and contains a high level of Omega-3 fatty acids and protein (2 to 2.5%) compared to other vegetables. In fact, it is a better nutrient source than spinach. It can be eaten fresh or cooked and has no bitter taste at all. Since it has a mucilaginous quality it is great for soups and stews.
- Seeds may be eaten either raw or ground and made into bread.
- Medical Uses: In addition recent studies suggest that Omega-3s may have positive effects on the brain and may aid in such conditions as depression, bipolar disorder, Alzheimer's disease, autism, schizophrenia, attention deficit disorder, hyperactivity and migraines. Though very beneficial, there are few good dietary sources other than seafood for Omega-3s.

