

# Lantana camara (Lantana)

Botanical Bytes by Bruner

By Gregory Bruner

Foliage Height: 36-60”

Foliage Width: 36-60”

Flower Height: 36-60”

Foliage Color: Green

Flower Color: Orange, Yellow, Red

USDA Hardiness: 8-11 (Few Cultivars 7)

Moisture: Average-Dry

Light: Full Sun – Part Sun



Because Lantana camara is one of the popular genetic building blocks used in the creation of some of the popular lantana cultivars, I thought it was a good place to start in our education about Lantana. Look for more “Bytes” of cultivars in the future.

The native range of Lantana camara is quite extensive in more tropical areas. It enjoys the climates of Mexico, Central America, and some parts of South America to name a few. Lantana has adapted to the southern United States readily because the climate closely mimics its natural range.

Lantana camara is most commonly called Lantana, but it is also known by many other different names such as Shrub Verbena or Spanish Flag within the United States. Globally it is known as Ayam (Malaysia), Flowered Sage (Jamaica), or Supirrosa (Spanish Galapagos Islands).

The ease of growing this plant is one of its most alluring charms. This plant actually suffers if given too much love and attention. Lantana that is watered and fertilized excessively will actually flower less. The strong aggressive roots thrive in a well-drained site but are able to adapt to a wide range of soils. Lantana’s combination of low water needs as well as heat and salt tolerance make this plant an excellent choice for xeriscaping, hanging baskets, and beach plantings.

Lantana is a favorite of many small and large butterflies. Birds also enjoy the blue/black berries. Many cultivars have actually been bred to have fewer berries to reduce spread of this plant beyond our gardens by birds. Deer generally do not bother lantana. The leaves of Lantana give off a strong aroma. Gardeners will debate what this aroma reminds them of..... let your nose decide.

Plant extracts from Lantana are used in a number of treatments for illnesses by herbalists. The extracts are used to treat chickenpox, measles, asthma, and high blood pressure.

The uses for Lantana go beyond gardening in some parts of the world. The small branches of this versatile plant can be bundled to make brooms, while the larger stalks are even used in the creation of tables and chairs. Large stems can be used for firewood, while shredded smaller stems are used as mulches. Chemically speaking, compounds have been extracted as experimental insecticides, herbicides, fungicides, and nematocides. Most of these so far have not been cost effective to produce. The stems have even been harvested and used in paper production, but the cost has been too high to be commercially viable.

The traits of heat and drought tolerance combined with the ability to attract butterflies and birds make this perennial a favorite of butterfly gardeners in the warmer regions of the United States. Named cultivars have been bred to be less aggressive, so please avoid digging naturalized clumps. The hardiness has also been improved in some cultivars down to Zone 7. Cultivars of Lantana camara are a wonderful choice for gardeners who like a low maintenance, easy-to-care-for perennial in the south.