**Firecracker Plant**  
*Russelia equisetiformis*

**Introduction**
Firecracker Plant is a weeping shrub that, when in full bloom, looks as if it is raining flowers. These slender, red, tubular flowers appear in the summer and hang on the plant like little firecrackers during most of the year. The flowers occur in 12-inch-long sprays and are a delight to the onlooker. The slim and pendulous branches of this plant lack foliage; the leaves are reduced to bracts. However, the branches and bracts are of fine texture and have a very pleasant color. The fruit of Firecracker Plant are small, inconspicuous, and also hang in clusters.

**General Information**
Scientific name: *Russelia equisetiformis*  
Pronunciation: russ-SEEL-lee-uh eck-kwiss-see-tiff-FORmiss  
Common name(s): Firecracker Plant  
Family: Scrophulariaceae  
Plant type: shrub  
USDA hardiness zones: 9B through 11  
Planting month for zone 9: year round  
Origin: not native to North America  
Uses: specimen; foundation; border; mass planting; cascading down a wall; accent  
Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

**Description**
Height: 3 to 5 feet  
Spread: 6 to 12 feet  
Plant habit: weeping  
Plant density: moderate  
Growth rate: moderate  
Texture: fine

**Foliage**
Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite  
Leaf type: leaves rare  
Leaf margin: dentate  
Leaf shape: ovate  
Leaf venation: none, or difficult to see  
Leaf type and persistence: evergreen  
Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches  
Leaf color: green  
Fall color: no fall color change  
Fall characteristic: not showy
Flower
Flower color: red
Flower characteristic: year-round flowering

Fruit
Fruit shape: oval
Fruit length: less than .5 inch
Fruit cover: dry or hard
Fruit color: brown
Fruit characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

Trunk and Branches
Trunk/bark/branches: typically multi-trunked or clumping stems; not particularly showy
Current year stem/twig color: green
Current year stem/twig thickness: thin

Culture
Light requirement: plant grows in full sun
Soil tolerances: acidic; alkaline; sand; loam; clay;
Drought tolerance: high
Soil salt tolerances: good
Plant spacing: 36 to 60 inches

Other
Roots: usually not a problem
Winter interest: no special winter interest
Outstanding plant: not particularly outstanding
Invasive potential: aggressive, spreading plant
Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests

Use and Management
This 4-foot-high shrub can be used as an unclipped hedge if there is enough space to accommodate its wide spreading habit. It is also useful as a tall ground cover. It is quite charming in a container or large hanging basket and is lovely when cascading over a wall. Branches droop several feet down the side of a container. The Firecracker Plant is tolerant of different types of soils as long as they are well-drained. It does require full sun for best flowering and fullest growth. Plants tolerate extended drought once established. Unfortunately, plants can escape cultivation and have been found forming thickets on disturbed sites such as along roadsides and embankments. Propagation of Firecracker Plant is by simple layers and cuttings.

Pests and Diseases
Russelia equisetiformis is occasionally bothered by chewing insects, nematodes, and mites.

by Edward F. Gilman