**Plumbago**

**Plumbago auriculata**

**Introduction**
This sprawling, mounding, somewhat vine-like, evergreen shrub is quite outstanding because it is covered most of the year with clusters of pale blue, phlox-like flowers. Plumbago is excellent as a foundation planting, or when used in planters. It will cascade down a retaining wall, showing off the unusual blue flowers. It has also been sheared into a hedge but most of the flowers are removed at each pruning.

**General Information**
Scientific name: Plumbago auriculata  
Pronunciation: plum-BAY-go ah-rick-yoo-LAY-tuh  
Common name(s): Plumbago, Cape Plumbago, Sky Flower  
Family: Plumbaginaceae  
Plant type: shrub  
USDA hardiness zones: 9 through 11  
Planting month for zone 9: year round  
Origin: not native to North America  
Uses: border; mass planting; container or above-ground planter; hedge; attracts butterflies  
Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

**Description**
Height: 6 to 10 feet  
Spread: 8 to 10 feet  
Plant habit: spreading; round  
Plant density: moderate  
Growth rate: fast  
Texture: fine

**Foliage**
Leaf arrangement: alternate  
Leaf type: simple  
Leaf margin: undulate  
Leaf shape: oblong  
Leaf venation: brachidodrome  
Leaf type and persistence: evergreen  
Leaf blade length: less than 2 inches  
Leaf color: green  
Fall color: no fall color change  
Fall characteristic: not showy
Flower
Flower color: blue, year-round flowering; pleasant fragrance

Fruit
Fruit shape: elongated
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: not particularly showy; typically multitrunked or clumping stems
Current year stem/twig color: green
Current year stem/twig thickness: thin

Culture
Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun
Soil tolerances: clay; sand; acidic; loam; slightly alkaline
Drought tolerance: moderate
Soil salt tolerances: unknown
Plant spacing: 36 to 60 inches

Other
Roots: sprouts from roots or lower trunk
Winter interest: plant has winter interest due to unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter trunk, or winter flowers
Outstanding plant: not particularly outstanding
Invasive potential: not known to be invasive
Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests

Use and Management
Needing full sun for best growth and flowering, Plumbago will grow on any fertile, well-drained soil, becoming drought tolerant once established. Leaves may yellow on soils with a high pH, indicating mineral-deficiency. Plumbago responds well to an application or two of fertilizer during the growing season to encourage continuous growth and flowering. Excessive growth can be removed at any time of year. Plants in north-central Florida quickly recover in the spring following a killing freeze. Allow four to six feet between plants in a mass planting so the natural cascading, fountain shape develops. Plumbago also looks attractive as a specimen if located in a low ground cover. The variety ‘Alba’ has white flowers. Propagation is by seed, cuttings, or division. Pest problems include cottony cushion scale and mites.

Pests and Diseases
No diseases are of major concern.

by Edward F. Gilman