

***Pachystachys lutea* Golden Shrimp Plant¹**

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Introduction

The golden shrimp plant is a colorful, soft-stemmed, tropical shrub typically massed in beds or maintained as a background plant in a mixed perennial planting (Fig. 1). This 36- to 48-inch-tall, upright perennial has dark green, ovate leaves that are 6 inches long. The showy inflorescence consists of a congested raceme of bright yellow bracts from among which pure white flowers emerge over several weeks. Flowers are displayed above the foliage and contrast nicely with the dark green canopy. New inflorescence are produced throughout the warm months.



Figure 1. Golden shrimp plant

General Information

Scientific name: *Pachystachys lutea*

Pronunciation: puh-KISS-tuh-kiss LOO-tee-uh

Common name(s): golden shrimp plant, yellow shrimp plant

Family: *Acanthaceae*

Plant type: shrub

USDA hardiness zones: 9B through 11 (Fig. 2)

Planting month for zone 9: year round

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round

Origin: not native to North America

1. This document is FPS452, one of a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Original publication date October, 1999. Reviewed June, 2007. Visit the EDIS Web Site at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Uses: hedge; foundation; border; mass planting

Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

Description

Height: 2 to 3 feet

Spread: 2 to 3 feet

Plant habit: oval

Plant density: dense

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: undulate

Leaf shape: spatulate

Leaf venation: pinnate

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: white

Flower characteristic: spring flowering; summer flowering; fall flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: unknown

Fruit length: unknown

Fruit cover: unknown

Fruit color: unknown

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: medium

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun

Soil tolerances: acidic; slightly alkaline; sand; loam; clay

Drought tolerance:

Soil salt tolerances: poor

Plant spacing: 24 to 36 inches

Other

Roots: usually not a problem

Winter interest: no special winter interest

Outstanding plant: plant has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more

Invasive potential: not known to be invasive

Pest resistance: very sensitive to one or more pests or diseases which can affect plant health or aesthetics

Use and Management

The golden shrimp plant requires full sun to partial shade and fertile, acid, well-drained soils. The plant should only be expected to successfully overwinter without damage in zones 10 and 11. In zone 9b, the tops will be killed in a severe freeze but regrowth should occur from the roots. Elsewhere it can be used as an annual. Even where this perennial remains unscathed by winter frosts, it should be pruned back hard annually to overcome a tendency toward legginess. Plant a lowgrowing ground cover nearby to fill in the lower part of the plant. Golden

shrimp plant can be effectively maintained in a container. Regular fertilization during the growing season helps keep foliage green.

Golden shrimp plant is easily propagated from softwood and semi-ripened cuttings and begins to flower when less than 1 foot tall.

Pests and Diseases

Scales and spider mites may be troublesome pests for the shrimp plant.