

Loropetalum

Loropetalum (*Loropetalum chinense*), also known as Chinese fringe-flower, is a member of the Witchhazel family (Hamamelidaceae). The genus name, *Loropetalum*, is derived from the Greek words for strap and petal, and refers to the long, thin petals of its fringe-like blooms. While native to China, Japan and the Himalayas, loropetalum is well-adapted to all regions of South Carolina.



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The fringe-like blossoms of *Loropetalum chinense* provided the inspiration for both the common and genus names. Joey Williamson, ©2009 HGIC, Clemson Extension

The green-leafed, white-flowered species was introduced to the U.S. in 1880, but was not generally known until the purple-leafed, pink-flowering forms were introduced in the late 1980s/early 1990s. Since that time, these plants with their masses of blooms from mid-March through mid-April, and scattered blossoms during

the rest of the season, have become justifiably very popular.



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The masses of vibrant, fuchsia-pink blossoms and deep purple leaves of *Loropetalum chinense* var. *rubrum* Purple Diamond™ make it easy to understand the increased popularity of this shrub.

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Mature Height/Spread/Form

Loropetalum chinense is an evergreen shrub that generally grows to a height of 10 to 15 feet with a similar to somewhat smaller width. However, it is capable of greater height as evidenced by the 100-year-old specimens in Aiken that are 35 feet tall. It has a loose, slightly open habit and a roughly rounded to vase-shaped form with a medium-fine texture. The simple, finely toothed to entire (smooth-edged) leaves are 1 to 2½ inches long and arranged alternately on somewhat arching branches. The white to off-white flowers are about one inch long with petals that are 1/16th inch wide. Generally, 3 to 6 blooms are clustered at the tips of shoots as well as in leaf axils.

Growth Rate

The growth rate on upright, taller cultivars is fast.

Landscape Use

Loropetalums show excellent versatility in the landscape. They are attractive when grown in clusters or mixed screens as well as foundation plantings, single specimens, espaliers and bonsai. They make attractive hedges, but lose their naturally graceful form if heavily pruned. When limbed up, they form lovely, small trees.



Loropetalum chinense var. *rubrum* hedge.
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Loropetalum can be an effective groundcover, but may require periodic removal of vertical stems. Low-growing forms are being selected for this purpose.

In full bloom, the many cultivars of the pink-flowering variety are showy eye-catchers. The white-flowers of the species tend to be less visible against the leaves from a distance, but are very attractive when viewed up close. Individually, the purple-leaved forms provide a good contrast to both green and golden foliage plants and are a superior replacement to thorny, red barberry shrubs.

Cultivation

Loropetalums are cold hardy in USDA zones 7-10 and require minimal maintenance. Transplanting easily from containers, their preferred growing conditions include sun to partial shade (especially afternoon shade) and moist, well-drained, acidic soil with plenty of organic matter. They benefit from being mulched. Once established, they are very

tolerant of drought conditions. Loropetalums respond well to a light application of slow-release fertilizer in early April and again in early June.



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Loropetalum chinense limbed up to form small trees.
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Planted in the right location, they do not require pruning; however, they tolerate even heavy pruning very well. When necessary, prune in the spring after bloom so as not to reduce flowering the following spring.

Problems

Normally, loropetalums have few serious pest or disease problems. However, root rot can be an issue, especially in poorly drained soils. In addition, leaves may become chlorotic (yellow) in alkaline (pH greater than 7.0) soil. Recently, however, a bacterial gall disease (caused by the bacterium *Pseudomonas savastanoi*) has been found on loropetalums in SC. Inspect and avoid buying plants with galls. These dark-colored galls on branches may cause branch dieback or plant death. Prune the branches several inches below the galls, and dispose of the prunings. Disinfect the pruners between cuts by dipping in 10% bleach solution, or spray pruners with rubbing alcohol.

Varieties & Cultivars

Numerous cultivars are available, and new cultivars continue to be released. With the speed of its commercialization, some confusion exists as to how

many of the cultivars are, in actuality, different from each other. Regardless, the good news for consumers is that several cultivars are available with plenty of variation in leaf color, flower color and growth form, providing a loropetalum to suit a variety of purposes in sunny to partly shady landscapes.

Pink-Flowering Forms:

***Loropetalum chinense* var. *rubrum*:** Depending on the cultivar, this maroon- to red-purple-leaved variety has blossoms that range from pink to fuchsia to reddish pink as well as white. Height and width varies by cultivar, of which there are many.

- **‘Blush’:** Along with ‘Burgundy’, it is one of the original two introductions of var. *rubrum*. Its growth habit is more compact and denser than ‘Burgundy’. New growth is a bronze-red that matures to an olive-green. Flower color is fuchsia pink. There are 5-10 blossoms in a cluster and peak bloom time occurs in April with additional blooms occurring sporadically during the rest of the growing season. It reaches approximately 8 feet tall and wide. It has also been labeled as ‘Razzleberri’ (‘Monraz’).
- **‘Burgundy’:** New leaves are reddish purple, but turn a purplish green to dark olive green as they mature. In autumn, the oldest leaves turn orange-red to red. Clusters of 4-7 hot pink flowers are produced most prolifically in spring and then sporadically throughout the growing season. It reaches a height of 6-10 feet with a similar width.
- **‘Darkfire’:** This mid-sized cultivar has very deep dark foliage that remains purple even during the heat of the summer. Plant size is 5 to 6 feet tall and wide. The flowers are pink.
- **‘Daruma’:** This dwarf cultivar grows to 2 to 5 feet tall and 3 to 5 feet wide. The flowers are bright pink and the foliage is a deep plum color.
- **Ever Red® (‘Chang Nian Hong’):** Its leaves are a dark burgundy color that persists through the summer. Its flowers are the reddest of this variety. Mature height is approximately 5 feet tall with a similar width.



Ever Red® (*L. chinense* var. *rubrum* ‘Chang Nian Hong’) has dark red flowers.

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- **Little Rose Dawn™ (‘GriffCRL’ PP#16,615):** This cultivar originated as a sport from ‘Ruby’ loropetalum, and is more compact, more spreading, and a profuse bloomer with dark pink flowers. Mature height is approximately 8-10 feet tall.
- **Pizazz®:** Flowers are plum purple on this 6 to 8 foot tall by 6 to 8 foot wide shrub. New foliage opens a reddish-purple and becomes dark purple at maturity.
- **Plum Delight® (‘Hines Purpleleaf’):** This cultivar grows to 6 to 8 feet tall and wide. The flowers are dark pink and the foliage emerges rose-purple and matures bronze-purple.
- **Purple Daydream (‘PPI’ PP#25471):** This dwarf cultivar has vibrant pink flowers and dark purple foliage. Grows to 2 to 3 feet tall and 3 to 4 feet wide.
- **Purple Diamond® (‘Shang-hi’ PP#18331):** The leaves of this loropetalum are an intense, deep purple that lasts through the summer and provides an eye-catching contrast to its vibrant pink flowers. Mature height is approximately 4-5 feet tall with a similar width.
- **Purple Pixie™ (‘Peack’ PP#18441):** As with Purple Diamond™, the leaves are an intense, deep purple, and blooms are a vibrant, hot pink. However, the mature height is 1-2 feet with a spread of 4-5 feet. New growth tends to be ascending, but over time cascades downward. It is well suited for use as a groundcover, a container plant, or cascading over a wall.



Purple Pixie™ (*Loropetalum chinense* var. *rubrum*) is a spreading groundcover with deep purple foliage.

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- **Red Diamond™ ('Shang-Red')**: This mid-sized cultivar grows to 6 feet tall and 6 feet wide, and has vivid red flowers and dark burgundy foliage.
- **'Ruby'**: This is a compact shrub that grows to 3 to 5 feet tall and wide. The flowers are bright pink; the foliage begins reddish-burgundy and matures to a hunter green.
- **'Zhuzhou Fuchsia'**: The leaves of this cultivar are a distinctive blackish maroon color that persists through the summer. It has deep pink blooms, an upright habit and is a good choice for training as a standard (tree form) or espalier. It reaches 10-20 feet tall and is the most cold hardy of the pink-flowering forms.

White-Flowering Forms:

- **Carolina Moonlight™ ('NC1002' PP#18977)**: This dense, compact shrub is wider than it is tall, generally reaching 3-4 feet tall while spreading 4-5 feet. It is a prolific bloomer from late winter to early spring and then flowers sporadically throughout the season.

- **Snow Muffin® ('Snowmound' PP#11766)**: It is characterized by dense, procumbent growth habit when young. It develops into a roundish mound as it ages, maintaining its dense growth habit. New leaves are light green, maturing to dark olive green. Its white flowers are abundant from late winter to spring. Mature height is from 1-3 feet with a width of 2-3 feet.
- **Emerald Snow® ('Shang-White' PP#21738)**: This white-flowers cultivar has green foliage, but new growth is lime-green. Grows 4 feet tall by 4 feet wide.

Note: All cultivated varieties of plants have cultivar names by which they are known and sold. However, a few cultivated plants have both a cultivar name and a trademark name. For these plants, the trademark name is the recognized name for consumers to use in searching for and buying the plants. For trademarked plants, the cultivar name will be either a few letters & numbers or a nonsensical name in single quotes that is completely unimportant for the consumer or landscaper. They are included here simply because they are the official assigned cultivar names. Plant breeders do this so that if someone propagates the plant without permission, they will have to call it by the cultivar name, which no one will recognize.

Revised by Joey Williamson, HGIC Horticulture Extension Agent, Clemson University, 09/15. Originally prepared by J. McLeod Scott, Horticulture Extension Agent, Clemson University. New 08/09. Images added 11/13 & 03/16.

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