

Little Ruby Alternanthera

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Little Ruby Alternanthera (*Alternanthera dentata*)

- **Recommended Use:** Warm-season bedding plant
- **Exposure:** Full sun to partial shade
- **Size:** Height: 8 to 12 inches; width: 14 to 16 inches
- **Habit:** Ground cover, mounding, spreading
- **Bloom Time:** Spring, inconspicuous feature
- **Maintenance Category:** Easy
- **Water Use:** Low after establishment
- **Highlights:** Excellent ground cover with gorgeous foliage of ruby, burgundy and green colors. Tolerates heat, humidity and drought as well as many soils. Grown as a summer bedding plant.



Little Ruby in trials at the Hammond Research Station.

Summary

Alternanthera (*Alternanthera dentata*), often referred to as Joseph's coat, is a perennial, herbaceous, warm-season bedding plant. It will not survive frost but can return from roots after mild winters. Little Ruby is typically used as an annual in Louisiana. Little Ruby is used as a ground cover for its compact, mounding, spreading form. It is called Little Ruby for the beautiful ruby red underside of burgundy purple foliage. It has a vigorous compact growth habit and grows in USDA hardiness zones 9 through 11. Little Ruby Alternanthera is a heat-loving, drought-tolerant, tropical to subtropical plant that has low maintenance requirements. White flowers are displayed in the spring but are not nearly as showy as the gorgeous, contrasting foliage. Little Ruby is great as a ground cover, as a mass planting or a border plant and does great in containers and hanging baskets.

Requirements

- Neutral pH soil of 6.6 to 7.3.
- Full sun to partial shade throughout the day for best performance. Foliage is most intense in full sun.
- Plant after the danger of frost.
- Well-drained, moist, organically rich soil.

Growth Habit

- Compact, mounding, spreading, ground cover.
- Can grow 10 to 12 inches tall and up to 14 to 16 inches wide.
- Plant spacing should be 10 to 12 inches apart for dense area coverage.
- Plant in late winter to early spring after danger of last frost.
- Hardiness zones 9 to 11.



Care and Maintenance

- Provide adequate drainage. Grows well in both raised beds and containers.
- Ensure proper moisture after planting for a couple of weeks until established, then they are relatively drought tolerant.
- Apply 2 inches of mulch to help conserve moisture and reduce weed pressure.
- No special fertilization requirements. A general-purpose fertilizer applied in spring and again in the fall will suffice.
- No major pests have been identified in Louisiana.
- Plants can be sheared as needed to shape.

For more information on Little Ruby alternanthera and other Louisiana Super Plants, contact your local LSU AgCenter extension office or visit www.LSUAgCenter.com/SuperPlants.



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