

A native of Brazil, tibouchina is a lush evergreen shrub that blooms prolifically with purple flowers during the warm months. It prefers morning sun to part shade and well-draining, improved soil. Tibouchina has a medium growth rate and attracts butterflies, bees and other pollinators. It is a moderately cold and salt tolerant plant. Tibouchina benefits from regular pruning in the fall before the cooler weather sets in.

Species

Dwarf Tibouchina (*Tibouchina lepidota*), also known as Princess Flower, is a small shrub with dark purple flowers that each have five distinct petals. It reaches 3-4' tall and wide. Dwarf tibouchina works great in the landscape and also in containers, where it responds well to deadheading. This variety is a staple at Rockledge Gardens.

Purple Glory Tree or Glory Bush (*Tibouchina grandifolia*), is one of the most unique of the tibouchinas with its large, rounded velvety leaves. It reaches 5-7' tall and 3-5' wide and has beautiful purple flower spikes. This variety is considered a collector item at Rockledge Gardens.

Planting

For best results, see our "New Plants" handout or watch our proper planting video, which is found on our website. We suggest using our success kit (amended soil to be mixed 50/50 with native soil, and Bio-tone, a starter plant food) and planting tibouchina three feet apart. Finally, spread a thick layer of mulch around the roots taking care not to let the mulch touch the plant's stem.

Watering

For all new plants, we suggest watering daily for weeks 1 and 2, watering every other day for weeks 3 and 4, watering twice weekly for weeks 5 and 6, and watering once a week for weeks 7 and 8. (Watering includes hand, irrigation system and rain.) Water should be applied by hand for the first 4 to 8 weeks to ensure deep absorption into the soil. Use a hose to water around large plants and trees to completely soak the root ball. In week 9, let the irrigation system and/or the rain take over.

More information is available in our "New Plants" handout.

Fertilizing

Tibouchina should be fertilized during the growing season. In spring (March) and fall (September), use organic Espoma Holly-Tone. This fertilizer will condition the soil for the acid-loving tibouchina. Apply ½ to one cup of Holly-Tone for each plant and distribute lightly over the entire root area. Turn the top layer of soil and water plants thoroughly to mix the fertilizer into the soil.

Plant Problems

Root rot. As it does best in moist, well-draining soil, root rot is the main issue with tibouchina. A fungus develops because of poor drainage and excess moisture around the roots. Plants will decline and usually die from this disease if the issue isn't addressed early on. The first sign of root rot will typically appear as browning on the tips of the leaves. After that, all of the flower buds will fall off. To correct this problem, let the plant dry out entirely before watering again and reduce the amount of water that it gets after that. If there is a drainage problem, the plant should be moved to a new location. Ask an associate for advice on transplanting.

Pests. When cultivated in ideal conditions, tibouchina is resistant to most pests. However, scale, spider mites and nematodes can present problems if the plant is already stressed out. Ask us about treatments as soon as issues arise.

