Ocotillo

Fouquieria splendens

Height: 15 feet

Spread: 7 feet

Sunlight: ○ ◐

Hardiness Zone: 8

Other Names: Candlewood, Devil's Walking Stick

Description:

This distinctive succulent features upright spiny branches forming a vase-shaped habit; small, fleshy, rounded green leaves line the branches, and are drought-deciduous; bright red tubular flower clusters appear in spring; great as a hedge or screen



Ocotillo foliage
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Ornamental Features

Ocotillo features airy clusters of red tubular flowers at the ends of the branches from mid to late spring. It has green deciduous foliage which emerges light green in spring. The round leaves do not develop any appreciable fall color. It produces brown capsules from late summer to mid fall. The peeling brown bark adds an interesting dimension to the landscape.



Ocotillo
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Landscape Attributes

Ocotillo is an open multi-stemmed deciduous shrub with an indistinguished habit of growth. Its average texture blends into the landscape, but can be balanced by one or two finer or coarser trees or shrubs for an effective composition.

This is a relatively low maintenance shrub, and usually looks its best without pruning, although it will tolerate pruning. It is a good choice for attracting bees, butterflies and hummingbirds to your yard, but is not particularly attractive to deer who tend to leave it alone in favor of tastier treats. Gardeners should be aware of the following characteristic(s) that may warrant special consideration;

- Spiny

Ocotillo is recommended for the following landscape applications;

- Accent
- Mass Planting
- Hedges/Screening
- General Garden Use
- Naturalizing And Woodland Gardens
- Container Planting

Planting & Growing

Ocotillo will grow to be about 15 feet tall at maturity, with a spread of 7 feet. It has a low canopy with a typical clearance of 1 foot from the ground, and is suitable for planting under power lines. It grows at a slow rate, and under ideal conditions can be expected to live for 60 years or more.

This shrub does best in full sun to partial shade. It prefers dry to average moisture levels with very well-drained soil, and will often die in standing water. It is considered to be drought-tolerant, and thus makes an ideal choice for xeriscaping or the moisture-conserving landscape. This plant does not require much in the way of fertilizing once established. It is not particular as to soil pH, but grows best in sandy soils. It is somewhat tolerant of urban pollution. This species is native to parts of North America..

Ocotillo makes a fine choice for the outdoor landscape, but it is also well-suited for use in outdoor pots and containers. Because of its height, it is often used as a 'thriller' in the 'spiller-thriller-filler' container combination; plant it near the center of the pot, surrounded by smaller plants and those that spill over the edges. It is even sizeable enough that it can be grown alone in a suitable container. Note that when grown in a container, it may not perform exactly as indicated on the tag - this is to be expected. Also note that when growing plants in outdoor containers and baskets, they may require more frequent waterings than they would in the yard or garden.