Green Elephant Food

Portulacaria afra 'Green'



Green Elephant Food
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Height: 4 feet

Spread: 4 feet

Sunlight: ○

Hardiness Zone: 9a

Other Names: Mini Jade Plant, Elephant Bush, Porkbush

Description:

A compact upright plant with interesting red stems covered in small, succulent, light green leaves; grows larger in frost free areas; popular use in bonsai; very drought tolerant and great for rock gardens or containers



Green Elephant Food foliage
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Ornamental Features

Green Elephant Food is primarily valued in the landscape or garden for its ornamental globe-shaped form. It features dainty violet flowers at the ends of the branches in early summer. It has attractive light green foliage with hints of chartreuse. The tiny succulent round leaves are highly ornamental and remain light green throughout the winter. The smooth gray bark and crimson branches are extremely showy and add significant winter interest.

Landscape Attributes

Green Elephant Food is a multi-stemmed evergreen shrub with a more or less rounded form. It lends an extremely fine and delicate texture to the landscape composition which can make it a great accent feature on this basis alone.

This is a relatively low maintenance shrub, and can be pruned at anytime. Gardeners should be aware of the following characteristic(s) that may warrant special consideration;

- Insects

Green Elephant Food is recommended for the following landscape applications;

- Accent
- Mass Planting
- Rock/Alpine Gardens
- General Garden Use
- Container Planting

Planting & Growing

Green Elephant Food will grow to be about 4 feet tall at maturity, with a spread of 4 feet. It has a low canopy. It grows at a fast rate, and under ideal conditions can be expected to live for 40 years or more.

This shrub should only be grown in full sunlight. 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. Like most succulents and cacti, this plant prefers to grow in poor soils and should therefore never be fertilized. It is not particular as to soil pH, but grows best in poor soils, and is able to handle environmental salt. It is highly tolerant of urban pollution and will even thrive in inner city environments. This is a selected variety of a species not originally from North America. It can be propagated by cuttings; however, as a cultivated variety, be aware that it may be subject to certain restrictions or prohibitions on propagation.

Green Elephant Food 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.