

Hamelia patens Jacq.



Common Name	Firebush
Botanical Name	<i>Hamelia patens</i>
Family	Rubiaceae
Form	Shrub
Growth Habit	This evergreen shrub grows from 3'-5' tall in Central Florida where it dies back during the winter, but further south it may grow up to 15' tall. It has a dense growth form and is multi-stemmed.
Bark	Woody stems that are tinged with dark red.
Leaves	The elliptic to oval-shaped leaves, which are 5"-8" long, are found in whorls of 3-7 at each node. They are dark green and often tinged with dark red, as well as having red veins and petioles, while the undersides are grayish and hairy.
Flowers	The tubular flowers, which are from ¾"-1 ½" long, range in color from dark red to orangish to yellow. They are found in branching clusters at the ends of stems and bloom throughout the year, except during especially cold or dry periods.

Fruit	The fruit is a reddish to purplish-black ¼” berry that is found in clusters on the shrub.
Soil conditions	Prefers well-drained soils.
Water	Firebush has a moderate drought tolerance.
Light Requirement	Sun to partial shade; Firebush takes on its best appearance when grown in light shade.
Native Growth Zone	8B-11
Propagation	Seed, cuttings
Habitat	Found in moist hammocks and especially in coastal areas.
Remarks	Firebush is a shrub that attracts hummingbirds and butterflies, and is an excellent specimen for butterfly gardens. Some indigenous peoples of the tropics use extracts from the foliage of this shrub to make treatments for skin conditions, and it has been found to have antibacterial and antifungal properties. It can be pruned easily and will flower and grow very quickly.

Works Consulted