

Firespike

Odontonema strictum

Firespike adds a big pop of red to the garden making some gardeners suggest that it's the equivalent of red salvia on steroids. It produces clusters of 3-inch-long, tubular red flowers. The flowers appear during fall and winter. They attract hummingbirds and several species of butterflies. Because of its overall height and large, glossy foliage, firespike makes a great anchor when massed at the back of a garden bed. It also works well in cutting gardens. Firespike will tolerate a variety of soil conditions and it is one of only a few flowering plants that give good, red color in a partially shaded site, but for best blooming place firespike in full sun. Once established, firespike is moderately drought tolerant. A hard freeze can kill the above-ground growth, but the plant will typically return in the spring. Firespike often re-seeds itself and can also be propagated by cuttings. If the plant gets too tall, it can be pruned several times during the growing season.

Type: perennial small shrub

USDA hardiness zones: 8b through 11

Uses: mass planting; container or above-ground planter; accent; cutting garden

Origin: not native to North America

Height: 2 to 6 feet **Spread:** 2 to 3 feet

Plant spacing: 24 to 36 inches

Light requirement: part shade to part sun

Soil tolerances: slightly acid to slightly alkaline; sand; clay; silt; loam

Drought tolerance: moderate

Soil salt tolerances: low

Invasive potential: none

Pest resistance: no pests or diseases are of major concern

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Photo: UF/IFAS