



Hemigraphis



Hemigraphis alternata (burm. f.) T. Anders.
(synonym: *H. colorata* (BL.) Hall, f.)
Common names: hemigraphis, metal leaf, metallic plant,
red ivy, red-flame ivy
Native habitat: Java

Characteristics

Hemigraphis is a creeping, herbaceous, perennial groundcover growing to about 6 inches in height. The plant will spread laterally at a moderate rate but is overly aggressive. The leaves have a metallic purple upper surface and a solid purple lower surface. They are opposite, ovate to heart-shaped, with scalloped edges and grow to about 3 inches in length. The flowers are small ($\frac{1}{2}$ inch), white, and produced in narrow, inch-long spikes.

Location

Hemigraphis is best grown in light or medium shade. It loses much of its purple color in full sun. It prefers a slightly acid, moist soil. It does not tolerate drought or salt spray well.

Insects and diseases

The greenhouse orthezia, a small insect that feeds on the sap of the plant, is a serious problem and has limited

the use of hemigraphis. This insect will necessitate periodic control with insecticides.

Landscape uses

Hemigraphis is an excellent groundcover to provide color for shaded locations. It is useful under low shrubs because it does not climb readily. It grows well on banks and low walls because it roots at nodes. It can also be used as a hanging basket or planter plant. Because it is susceptible to infestation by the greenhouse orthezia, hemigraphis should be used in landscapes where spraying for insect control can be done if necessary.

Propagation

Hemigraphis roots readily from stem cuttings in 7–10 days.

Related species

H. repanda — a prostrate herb with narrow leaves to 2 inches long and white flowers in terminal spikes; a variegated form is available.

H. reptans — a less ornamental plant from Indonesia with green leaves and yellowish or white flowers.

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*Replaces Instant Information/Ornamentals and Flowers Series no. 7, 1983.