

Vermillionaire Cuphea (*Cuphea* x)

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Vermillionaire Cuphea (*Cuphea* x)

- **Common Names:** Vermillionaire cuphea, cigar plant or firecracker plant
- **Recommended Use:** Warm-season bedding plant and container plant, may perennialize in south Louisiana
- **Exposure:** Full sun preferred, increasing shade decreases blooms
- **Size:** 2 feet tall; 1-2 feet wide
- **Habit:** Maintains a compact, bushy form
- **Bloom Time:** Profuse orange-red blooms occur from spring to first frost.
- **Maintenance Category:** Low
- **Water Use:** Regularly irrigate at installation, but drought tolerant once established.
- **Highlights:** Showstopping blooms last from spring through fall, providing warm hues to annual beds and containers. The tubular orange-red flowers are sure to attract attention from horticulture enthusiasts and hummingbirds alike, while a host of other pollinators will also favor the flowers of this feature plant. This low-maintenance selection sports a compact habit that won't get too unruly. Once established, Vermillionaire cuphea does not demand excessive attention and is, in fact, quite tolerant of inconsistent watering and the consistently hot temperatures that we know all too well in Louisiana. For most of the state, this should be treated as an annual; however, overwintering is somewhat reliable in the warmer regions of Louisiana.

Summary

Flower power is the defining feature of Vermillionaire cuphea, providing bright orange-red blooms that add warmth to the landscape. The tubular flowers beckon hummingbirds, providing the necessary nectar to sustain a whole host of pollinators throughout the spring, summer and early fall seasons. A colorful addition to landscape beds, containers and pollinator garden compositions, Vermillionaire cuphea was selected as a Louisiana Super Plant due to its standout features, sustained blooms throughout summer and ecological contributions to the landscape.



Vermillionaire cuphea's compact, rounded form provides a variety of opportunities for use in landscape beds or containers. Photo by Allen Owings



The tubular flowers of Vermillionaire cuphea attract hummingbirds and other pollinators. Photo by Allen Owings

With a modest size of approximately 2 feet tall and wide, the compact habit presents an easy, low-maintenance way to add color to the landscape without too much sweating in the summer sun. While initial irrigation is needed at and soon after installation, Vermillionaire cuphea is quite drought tolerant once established. Can it handle the summer heat? Sure can. Vermillionaire cuphea thrives in the full sun, exhibiting enhanced flowering when kept out of shady sites. The lance-shaped, glossy green foliage of Vermillionaire cuphea provides a backdrop for the blooms, accentuating the orange-red flowers throughout the season.

With many *Cuphea*, the first frost will quickly inflict damage — rendering the once vibrant blooms a dull memory once the cold sets in. Typically treated as an annual, Vermillionaire cuphea will reliably provide color throughout the warm season in Louisiana; however, in the warmer, southern parts of the state, this species may perennialize and offer multi-year interest to the

landscape. Plant Vermillionaire cuphea in spring or early summer to increase the odds of this plant becoming a perennial performer in the garden.

Louisiana Super Plants are selected for their resilience to our unique conditions, but also for the aesthetic value they bring to landscape compositions and container plantings. With Vermillionaire cuphea, gardeners (and pollinators) will welcome abundant blooms throughout the season regardless of the heat or (once established) lack of rain that can occur during the warm season. While pollinators favor this plant, pests and diseases are generally not an issue for *Cuphea*. This low-maintenance pollinator magnet boasts season-long blooms, offering interest all throughout the warm season. If managed properly, year-after-year returns can be possible with its potential to perennialize. Consider this Vermillionaire cuphea as an alternative to other larger varieties found within this genus.

Requirements

- Performs exceptionally well in full sun and high heat, offering blooms throughout the spring, summer and pre-frost fall.
- More shade reduces blooms, so be mindful of selecting sites with sufficient sunlight.
- Irrigate at installation. Once established in the landscape, this plant is fairly drought tolerant.

Growth Habit

- Maintains a compact, bushy habit that is manageable in the landscape.
- The rounded form (approximately 2 feet tall and 2 feet wide) provides opportunities for use in landscape beds or containers



Vermillionaire cuphea's profuse blooms occur from spring to first frost. Photo by Allen Owings

Care and Maintenance

- Spring or summer installation supports maximum growth and establishment and increases chances of perennializing.
- Deadheading and shaping/pruning is generally not necessary.
- Ensuring adequate nutrition will support continued blooming. Light fertilizer applications throughout the season will sustain blooms as summer wanes. Limited pest and disease issues in the landscape.



Vermillionaire cuphea is quite drought resistant. Photo by Damon Abdi

For more information on Vermillionaire cuphea and other Louisiana Super Plants, contact your local LSU AgCenter Extension office or visit LSUAgCenter.com/SuperPlants.



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