



FYN Garden Q & A Series

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FYN Topic: Carolina Wild Petunia

Question: I want to plant a ground cover between stepping stones in my southern exposure garden. I came across a plant called stonecrop. Is this something that can take our summer heat and remain evergreen? Although this doesn't flower do you have any suggestions for a flowering ground cover that would fit that description? I originally thought mimosa would work. I tried it in another part of the garden (mistake as you know) and decided the "runners" could be a danger along a foot path. Davie., Cape Coral

Answer: What you are looking for is a well behaved edge plant staying six to 12 inches tall. Stonecrop usually refers to low-growing, pathway or container plants known as a group as sedums. The most common sedums here are chartreuse-gold in color: Sedum acre, golden carpet or gold moss. *Sedum rupestre* hybrids are also sold like 'Florida Friendly Gold'™ or Proven Winner 'Lemon Coral'™. *Sedum rupestre* has proven to be the tougher of the two when used farther south.. However our heat and humidity with full sun pushes it out of its normal tolerance range. I'd treat a stonecrop planting as annual plantings.

A more permanent solution for edge plantings include the popular, rhizomal-type Ecoturf perennial peanut. Avoid purchasing the stoloniferous type like Repens Golden Glory. Consider using native plants along pathways and stepping stones. Carolina Wild Petunia (*ruellia caroliniensis*) has worked with a northern exposure for me. It has violet, trumpet-shaped flowers on short hairy stems. A few other ideas: spiderwort, pencilflower, gaillardia and tropical sage. Several smaller, Florida bunchgrasses might work. Most are 16" to 24" high. Muhly grass and Elliott's lovegrass like it both sunny and dry. To see more native groundcovers, take a guided tour with a Master Gardener on Wednesday mornings starting at 10:30 AM at Rutenberg Park, 6490 South Pointe Blvd, Ft Myers.



Carolina Wild Petunia (Photo: Jaret C. Daniels,UFL)

Useful Links

- <http://www.floridayards.org>
- <http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu>
- <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/>
- <http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/FYN/FYNHome.shtml>

Thomas Becker is an extension agent for the Florida Yards and Neighborhoods (FYN) program at the Lee County Extension Service. Submit questions by calling the Horticulture Help Desk at 533-7504 between 9 a.m. and 4:p.m. or by emailing Extgardener@leegov.com. Visit his Web page at <http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/FYN/FYNHome.shtml>

<http://gardeningolutions.ifas.ufl.edu>

