FYN TOPIC:  Coral Creeper - Barleria repens

Question: Last week’s column identified a nursery pot marked as ‘Coral Bells’ as possibly being an azalea. It also could have been the shrub form of a common, tropical groundcover known as Barleria repens. In what places does this plant grow best?

Answer: If plants could only speak! Barleria repens is a tough, little exotic plant that stays evergreen all winter. Used in central Florida and south (Hardiness zones 10 and 11), this small shrub or vine looks strikingly similar to the dwarfing, ‘Karume’ hybrid azalea. Most gardeners will see this plant sprawling on the ground under a shade tree. It looks both shrubby while other forms look vine-like and quickly covers bare ground. A better identifier for this non-native, exotic plant would be ‘Coral Creeper.’ Whatever form of this plant you buy, it is always low-growing. It stays below 2 feet high. And, if it climbs, the vine climbs to about 6 feet on a tree trunk or wall. Unlike the azalea, Coral Creeper can send out new stems that become rooted on their own. This plant has small, rounded and glossy green leaves accented with pinkish or salmon-colored, tubular flowers. It survives best with regular irrigation and prefers being planted in partial shade and soils containing some organic matter.

Useful Links
http://www.floridayards.org
http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu
http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/
http://gardensolutions.ifas.ufl.edu

Barleria repens – Coral Creeper

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