Clerodendrum quadriloculare

Family: Lamiaceae

Common Names: Starburst, starburst Clerodendrum, shooting stars, firecracker bush

Synonyms (discarded names): Ligustrum quadriloculare

Origin: New Guinea, Philippines

U.S.D.A. Zone: 9b -11 (25°F minimum)

Plant Type: Shrub or standard tree

Growth Rate: Fast

Typical Dimensions: 15’x 10’

Bark Color: Tan

Leaf Persistence: Evergreen or deciduous

Flowering Months: January-April

Intense Blooming Days: 33

Repeat Bloomer: No

Flower Color: White, pink, salmon, coral

Light Requirements: High, partial shade

Drought Tolerance: High

Soil pH: Acid, neutral

Soil Type: Loam, sand

Nutritional Requirements: Moderate

Major Potential Pests: Mites

Propagation: Stem cuttings, root suckers

Human Hazards: None

Uses: Flowering species, home gardens, streetscapes, public spaces, massing, containers, anchoring plant, specimen

Geographic Distribution

Clerodendrum includes over 450 species of evergreen or deciduous trees, shrubs or climbers primarily from warm temperate and tropical regions of the Eastern Hemisphere. Starburst, Clerodendrum quadriloculare, is native of New Guinea and the Philippines and has become invasive on some Pacific Islands, forming dense thickets. This spectacular flowering species is planted throughout South Florida and is noticed primarily in winter when it bursts into bloom. It does not appear on the Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council list of invasive plants.

Growth Habit

Naturally occurring as a fast-growing monoecious shrub, starburst is just as often seen as a small stan-
dard tree with one or numerous trunks. Like most Clerodendrums, it produces suckers but generally not to an uncontrollable extent in South Florida. The young stems are almost quadrangular. The bark on older wood is slightly roughened and tan. The canopy is compact in full sun and the limbs are thin and widely spreading in shade.

**Leaves**
The leaves are on a 2 to 4 inch long petiole. The blades are simple and entire and are commonly 6 to 15 inches long and about 4 inches wide. They are ovate to oblong with a pointed apex and slightly wavy margins. The top of the leaves are a dark green with a purple tint. The bottom is a glossy purple. Leaf arrangement is opposite. In winter, the leaves lose much of their luster. There is a variegated cultivar that consists of light yellow, burgundy and dark green leaves.
Flowering and Flowers
Starbursts need full sun for best flowering. Although it will bloom in partial shade, the flowers will not be as numerous and the flowering period is shortened. In full sun, there are approximately 33 intense blooming days. Under the direst soil conditions if preceded by cold weather, it may flower without leaves. The best flower display occurs on trees and shrubs with full foliage cover. Depending on individual plants, the flower clusters appear between January and April.

Flowers are borne on terminal globose cymes than can be 12 inches across. Clusters of pink and white flower buds first appear. The buds elongate to form a tubular flower. The tube is long and thin and measures about 4.5 inches from calyx to the protruding stamens. Tube color is coral-pink and opens into five, recurving, light pink or white petals. The heavy cymes can weigh down the branches. The flowers are visited by hummingbirds and long-tongued butterflies. The fruit is a small quadrilobate violet drupe resting on a persistent calyx.
Uses and Maintenance
Starburst is commonly used as a small ornamental flowering tree or shrub. It is also grown for its striking foliage and makes a useful hedge. Plant it to anchor shrubby borders, as a specimen plant along roadway medians or in other public spaces or gardens.

It needs plenty of water to get established. It grows best in acidic or slightly alkaline soils. Those being soils with pH of 7.5 or below. Otherwise, the foliage may appear straggly.

Starburst can produce root suckers from underground rhizomes some distance from the mother plant. When they first appear, these suckers are easily controlled by hand pulling or mowing. They will have to be dug out with a spade or other garden tool if allowed to grow too large. Under certain circumstances, it may be desirable to allow some suckers to grow to form a shrubby screen.

After flowering, starburst can be heavily pruned to remove 50% or more of its wood. This will not inhibit next season’s flowering. It requires minimal pruning to be shaped as desired. The plant is readily propagated from rooted suckers or from cuttings.
Early March

Early April

Large shrub about 18 feet tall in back yard
References
Culbert, Dan. 2005. **Shooting Star Spreads Color.** UF/IFAS Okeechobee County Extension, Okeechobee, Florida

*Learn 2 Grow. Clerodendrum quadriloculare.*


Puccio, Pietro. **Clerodendrum quadriloculare.**


Useful Links
Brown, S.H. 2010. **Shavingbrush Tree** (*Pseudobombax ellipticum*). UF/IFAS Lee County Extension, Fort Myers, Florida

Brown, S.H. 2011. **Glory-Bower/Cashmere Bouquet.** UF/IFAS Lee County Extension, Fort Myers, Florida

Brown, S.H., 2011. **Tube Flower** (*Clerodendrum indicum*). UF/IFAS Lee County Extension, Fort Myers, Florida

All pictures taken by Stephen H. Brown

This fact sheet was reviewed Peggy Cruz and Karen Headlee, Lee County Extension; Pat Rooney, Lee County Master Gardener

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