

(*Rhoeo discolor*, *Rhoeo spathacea*, *Tradescantia bicolor*, *Tradescantia discolor*)

- *Tradescantia spathacea* is also known as Boat-Lily, Boat Plant, Man-In-A-Boat, Moses-In-A-Boat, Moses-In-A-Basket, Moses-In-A-Raft, Moses-In-The-Bulrushes, Oyster Plant, Osterplant, Purple-Leaf Spiderwort, or Rheo; this classic interiorscape plant reminds one of a cross between a Setcreasea and a Yucca plant, consisting of evergreen spirally arranged rosettes of sword-shaped leaves but with spiderwort-like flowers in a boat-shaped bract; despite year-round flowering where temperatures permit, most cultivars of *T. spathacea* are grown for their handsome foliage and form rather than their small flowers; thick sword-shaped leaves are held tightly on short stout stems that slowly sucker to form colonies over time; the most common cultivars are two-tone with green upper surfaces and purple or reddish lower surfaces, although other individuals have all green leaves or other variegation patterns with white, yellow, pink, green, reds, and purples; leaves vary in length from 6" to 12" and individual plants are usually 12" to 18" tall by 12" to 24" wide.
- The small white perfect flower has three petals and is subtended by larger bracts forming a boat-like shape, hence the common names related to boats or cradles; bracts are usually of a similar color pattern as the leaves; the specific epithet means spathe-like, probably in reference to these bracts.
- These plants can be grown in full sun to moderate shade with a range of soil types; in fact these plants are semi-epiphytic often growing on palm trunks or other niches with essentially no soil; variegated forms benefit from some afternoon shade; *Tradescantia spathacea* is heat tolerant, but is easily damaged in winter, being cold hardy only in USDA hardiness zones 9 (8b protected locations only) to 11; avoid water logged soils; this species is popular as a container plant for its unique form, foliage colors, and tolerance of indoor conditions; it is also used as a bedding plant or small scale groundcover where hardy outdoors, particularly in shady areas; the resemblance of the plants to Yuccas or Agaves has led to their use in subtropical and tropical rock, cacti and succulent gardens.
- *Tradescantia spathacea* is reported to cause a dermal irritation in some people and be poisonous in large quantities if swallowed; another caution is that there are reports of pets, particularly dogs, developing severe dermal allergies to this species which may require veterinary treatment; this Central American and Caribbean native has escaped cultivation in many other tropical locations.