**Stachytarpheta jamaicensis** (L.) M.H. Vahl  
*Blue Porterweed*

**(Stachytarpheta indica)**

**Other Common Names:** Blue Snakeweed, Common Snakeweed, Jamaican Vervain.

**Family:** Verbenaceae.

**Cold Hardiness:** A cold intolerant subtropical / tropical plant, hardy in USDA zones 10 (9) and 11.

**Foliage:** Evergreen; opposite; simple; ovate to oblong-elliptic; 1½ to 2½ (3½) long by 1 to 1½ (2) wide; tips acute; pinnately veined; rugose, quilted in appearance from above; veins strongly raised beneath; nearly glabrous; margins dentate-serrate; dark green to blue-green; base cuneate; petiole ½ to ¾ long and winged.

**Flower:** The 12 to 18 inflorescences are spikes of small blue to violet-purple ¼ five-lobed tubular flowers that are perhaps most aptly described as resembling a rat’s tail with flowers; flowering occurs year-round in the tropics; only a few flowers open on each inflorescence at a time, so much of the flower stalk remains without bloom even during the flowering process; flowers open in the morning, but tend to close in the afternoon.

**Fruit:** The fruit are two tiny nutlets enclosed in the dry calyx; not ornamental.

**Stem / Bark:** Stems — medium thickness; light to medium green turning brown and becoming semi-woody; squarish or at least four-sided in cross-section; scattered small stout bristly hairs give the stem a scabrous feel; Buds — tiny; 1/16 to 1/32 long; light green; foliose; Bark — not often formed in our region.

**Habit:** Blue Porterweed forms an irregular low spreading subshrub 3 to 4 tall with an equal or greater spread; the flowers are held on snake-like sinuous flowering spikes.

**Cultural Requirements:** Full sun to partial shade; adapted to a range of soils, pH adaptable; tolerates moderate drought, but growth is most vigorous when irrigated; somewhat salt and heat tolerant.

**Pathological Problems:** None serious; the foliage may be feed on by various chewing insects and white flies can be an occasional problem.

**Ornamental Assets:** Dense rich foliage topped by snaky spikes of blue flowers; attracts butterflies.

**Limitations & Liabilities:** Plants tend to look rather ratty and unkept when not blooming ... sometimes even when in flower.

**Landscape Utilization:** Summer color; background plants for shorter stature plantings.

**Other Comments:** The genus name is derived from the Greek words for thick spike, in reference to the inflorescence; Blue Porterweed is an interesting novelty accent and plants can be noticeable when flowering en masse, but they are too irregular in form to justify extensive usage.

**Native Habitat:** Tropical America, including Florida; widely naturalized throughout tropical climates around the world.

**Related Taxa:** Several species of *Stachytarpheta* M.H. Vahl can be found in tropical climates, some as cultivated ornamentals and others as weeds; a dwarf form, Keys Porterweed, is reported by some authorities.

*C. mutabilis* (N. J. von Jacquin) M.H. Vahl  
*Pink Porterweed*

Also known as Pink Snakeweed or Orange Porterweed; this native of the American tropics is widely cultivated throughout the subtropical and tropical climates worldwide; this taxon develops into an irregular subshrub 6 to 7 tall; the foliage is a bit lighter green and more pubescent, the size larger, and the canopy more open than with *S. jamaicensis*. 
C *Stachytarpheta mutabalis* (N.J. von Jacquin) M.H. Vahl var. *violacea* Mold. has blue to violet flowers.

**References:** Ellison, 1995; Haehle and Brookwell, 1999; Whistler, 2000.

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