

***Calibrachoa*** Llave & Lex.  
(*Petunia* in part)

**Million-Bells**

**Other Common Names:** Calibrachoa.

**Family:** Solanaceae.

**Cold Hardiness:** Hardiness is variable from USDA zone 9(8) through 11 among the hybrid cultivars representing this genus in the trade; although serving as a herbaceous perennial in mild climates, plants die in cold winters outside of the subtropics and may succumb to the intense heat of summer in the Southcentral and Southwestern US where they are best used as cool or transition season annuals; *Calibrachoa* is often used as summer annuals in cooler climates.

**Foliage:** Semi-evergreen to evergreen; alternate, subopposite, or opposite; simple;  $\frac{3}{4}$  to  $1\frac{1}{2}$  long; tips obtuse to nearly rounded; margins entire; bases cuneate; veins pinnate with the main vein lighter in color than the blade and slightly raised beneath; minute pubescence is present on the blade; leaves are green to bluish green in color, with no fall color development; petiole winged,  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  long.

**Flower:** Broadly trumpet to nearly bell-shaped perfect flowers occur in a range of colors from pink, bluish purple, magenta, salmon to a deep red; in cooler climates plants bloom throughout the growing season, in most of our region bloom peaks in spring; individual flowers are  $\frac{3}{4}$  to 1 long and wide; the colorful corolla is fused with five shallow lobes, whereas the green calyx is fused at the base with five recurving lanceolate lobes.

**Fruit:** The fruits are tiny achenes which are not ornamental.

**Stem / Bark:** Stems — stiff; rounded; light green to yellowish green; not sticky as with *Petunia* × *hybrida*; internodes are short with stems densely branched; Buds — foliose; tiny;  $\frac{1}{16}$  to  $\frac{1}{32}$  long, but often elongating to form new shoots shortly after forming; green; Bark — not applicable.

**Habit:** The cultivars of *Calibrachoa* available in the trade are densely branched sprawling herbaceous plants 6 to 10 ft tall and spreading 18 to 24 (36) wide; the overall texture is medium-fine.

**Cultural Requirements:** Full sun to part shade; plants with some shade will survive longer into the summer months; these taxa are fairly heavy feeders which benefit from periodic fertilizer applications; this is particularly the case with micronutrients when plants are growing on high pH soils; *Calibrachoa* grow best on acidic soils with regular fertilization and irrigation, although some cultivars possess a small degree of drought tolerance; deadheading is not required.

**Pathological Problems:** White flies, aphids, and powdery mildew can occasional be problems in the landscape; *Pythium* root rots can be a problem in wet substrates during production.

**Ornamental Assets:** Good tight low spreading growth habit and a long showy season of bloom are the key ornamental features.

**Limitations & Liabilities:** Cold and heat tolerance are both limited; plants tend to die or slump badly in our summer heat; all cultivars at present are vegetatively propagated, increasing propagation costs and the potential for spread of viral infections.

**Landscape Utilization:** Cool or transition season containers; window boxes or wall planters; bedding; edging; plants are particularly effective where they can sprawl down a slope or over a small ledge.

**Other Comments:** *Calibrachoa* are fairly recent new comers to the main stream landscape trade, with the first popular cultivars introduced to the trade in the early 1990s and then only gaining widespread acceptance in the past few years; most taxa were at one time considered part of the genus *Petunia*; not surprisingly, they resemble miniature versions of the multiflora *Petunias*.

**Native Habitat:** Cultivars of *Calibrachoa* in the trade are of hybrid garden origin, but the parental species were natives of South America.

**Related Taxa:** Nearly all taxa currently in the trade are of hybrid origin; most of the original hybrid cultivars were developed by breeders at the Japanese firm Suntory; since that time others have also introduced selections.

***Calibrachoa parviflora*** (A.L. de Jussieu) D'Arch  
**(*Petunia parviflora*)**

**Beach Petunia**

- C Also known as Wild Petunia or Seaside Petunia; this small annual is extensively naturalized along the Eastern and Western coasts of North America; it has small  $\frac{3}{4}$ " long trumpet-shaped flowers with purple corollas and yellow throats; this species is thought to originally be a native of the tropical Americas.
- C Plants are salt tolerant as the common names imply, but they are usually found growing where soils are moist and a steady water supply is available; naturalized in USDA zones 8-11.

**References:** Hodgson, 2002.

Copyrighted 2005 with all rights reserved by Michael A. Arnold; intended for future inclusion in *Landscape Plants For Texas And Environs, Third Edition*.