

# Pentas 'Graffiti' Series

Your full-sun or shade solution

Jimmy Turner



**P**entas are one of the best summer annuals for Texas, and the new 'Graffiti' series makes them more valuable than ever.

Historically, pentas were large plants that reached 3 feet and taller. These lanky plants were not particularly floriferous and quite often would flop over or need staking to keep them upright through the summer. The introduction of two of my other favorite pentas varieties, the 'Butterfly' and 'Galaxy' series, solved some of the problems, but they still get between 2½ and



Above: Pentas 'Graffiti' series with tricolor sweet potato vine.

3 feet tall, making them too large for some bedding applications and smaller yards.

Then the 'Graffiti' series was released. These pentas are a perfect fit for most bedding applications, at a maximum of 12 to 18 inches tall. This series has compact mounds of foliage that are constantly crowned with large clusters of flowers.

Like other pentas, the 'Graffiti' series shrugs off our Texas heat and humidity. The 3-inch clusters of blooms cover the plants from April until October without a pause even during hottest days of summer. Additionally, they never need shearing, deadheading or staking.

'Graffiti' series is available in four colors: red, violet, white and pink. Each vibrant hue resists fading in the high heat of Texas summer. My personal favorite color is the violet form. There aren't many summer bedding plants that come in such a pure, deep and velvety purple.

Many gardeners do not realize that pentas work equally well in full sun or shade. In full sun, I like to mix violet 'Graffiti' pentas with white and pink purslane and tricolor sweet potato vine, or in shade with white impatiens and lemon lollipop.

Pentas flower most heavily when they are watered regularly and fertilized monthly. Those planted in full sun will need more water than those in shade. Make sure your soil has well-composted organic matter added to help with drainage.

The Dallas Arboretum Trial Program is always on the search for great plants that can be installed in late spring and will flourish until first frost. 'Graffiti' pentas has been one of our best discoveries. This plant has performed so well that I am using it across the garden this year in my displays. If you are looking for an annual that will flower all summer long in sun or shade and stay compact in your garden, then look no further. 'Graffiti' pentas series should be available in your local retail nurseries starting in late spring and throughout the summer. ★

*About the author:* Jimmy Turner is Director of Horticulture Research at the Dallas Arboretum and is a regular contributor to this publication. You can also find Jimmy's Plant of the Month in each issue of Neil Sperry's e-gardens newsletter. Go to [www.neilsperry.com](http://www.neilsperry.com) and sign up to receive your newsletter today.

## AT A GLANCE

Latin name: *Pentas lanceolata* 'Graffiti' series

Common name: Egyptian star flower or star cluster

Flowers: 3-inch clusters of multiple 5-pointed flowers

Foliage: Dark green

Mature height: 1 foot

Hardiness: Annual

Soil: Well-drained

Exposure: Full sun or shade

Water usage: Medium

Sources: Local retail nurseries

## Did you know?

The word "pentas" comes from the Greek word meaning "five," which references the star-shaped flowers. And, pentas, with an "s," is the correct way to refer to just one plant, as well as a group of them.