

wandering jew

BOTANICAL NAME

Tradescantia zebrina, syn. *Zebrina pendula*
(trad-es-KAN-shee-a ze-BRY-na)

COMMON NAMES

Wandering Jew, Inch plant

DESCRIPTION

This herbaceous perennial has creeping shoots from which grow pointed, oval, fleshy leaves. The distinctive coloring is green and silver striped on top and red-dish-purple underneath.

DECORATIVE LIFE

Plants can last from months to years.

availability

Tradescantias are available year-round.

in-store and consumer care

WATER Water thoroughly from spring through fall and less during the winter.

LIGHT The plants do best in bright light.

TEMPERATURE Average room temperature is preferable, from 60 F to 75 F. Avoid temperatures below 55 F.

HUMIDITY Mist the leaves often.

FERTILIZER Feed *Tradescantia zebrina*s with a balanced houseplant fertilizer every two weeks from spring through late summer. Feed monthly in winter.

PROPAGATION Three-inch stem cuttings can be propagated in spring or summer. Rooting hormone can be used, but the cuttings usually will root even without it in about three weeks.

PESTS AND PROBLEMS Aphids and spider mites can be problems, and affected stems should be pinched back. Dispose of affected leaves in a sealed plastic bag. Rinse the plant with water. Insecticidal soap can be used if these insects and mites remain a problem.

PRUNING Pinch back leggy stems to encourage new branches and a bushier form. Remove all-green shoots as soon



TRADESCANTIA ZEBRINA
WANDERING JEW

as they appear (a sign that the plant isn't getting enough light or is being overfertilized).

LEAF YELLOWING Yellowed leaves and limp stems are a sign the plant isn't receiving enough water. Brown leaf tips are caused by air that is too dry, a condition that also can encourage spider mites.

fun facts

FAMILY *Tradescantias* are members of the *Commelinaceae* (spiderwort) family.

HOME SWEET HOME They are native to Mexico and Brazil. Common relatives include *Rhoeo* and other spiderworts.

WHAT'S IN A NAME The genus is named for naturalists and travelers John Tradescant Sr. and his son, John Tradescant. Each served as gardener to King Charles I, also known as Charlemagne, of France and the Holy Roman Empire.

The epithet *zebrina*, from the Portuguese for "zebra," refers to the plants' striped coloring.

COLOR CHAMELEON Lighting affects these plants' coloring—low light brings out the green color, and high light will increase the purple in the leaves.

BREATHE EASY *Tradescantia zebrina* is among plant species that can remove air pollutants, such as those found in cigarette smoke.



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common varieties

- *Tradescantia albiflora* 'Albovittata' (Giant white inch plant) features white stripes on bluish-green leaves.
- *Tradescantia fluminensis* 'Quicksilver' features green and silver striped leaves.
- *Zebrina pendula* 'Quadricolor' features green, silver, pink and red foliage.
- *Zebrina pendula* 'Purpusii' is green and purple.
- *Callisia elegans* (Striped inch plant) is sometimes sold as *Setcreasea striata*. It has small leaves (1 to 1.5 inches) with dull-green foliage and long stems. **sr**



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Some information provided by:
The Chain of Life Network®, www.chainoflifenet.com
The Complete Guide to Conservatory Plants by Ann Bonar
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