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gynura



Photos courtesy of The John Henry Company

BOTANICAL NAME

Gynura spp.
(gy-NUR-a)

COMMON NAMES

Velvet plant, Purple velvet plant, Royal velvet plant

DESCRIPTION

Gynuras are fast-growing plants that are distinctive for their dark green or dark red leaves covered in shiny purple hairs. The plants can grow to 24 inches tall, with toothy leaves that range from 3 inches to 8

inches long. The variety 'Purple Passion' is an upright variety that is very dark purple in coloring. *Gynuras* also are available in trailing forms.

DECORATIVE LIFE

With proper care, individual plants can live several years. Plants may begin to decline after about a year, so stem cuttings can allow them to last perpetually (see "Propagation").

AVAILABILITY

Gynuras are available year-round.

Gynura aurantiaca 'Purple Passion' — Purple velvet plant

in-store and consumer care

LIGHT Bright light is necessary to maintain *Gynuras*' vivid colors. Some direct sunlight is beneficial.

WATER The soil should be kept moist at all times; reduce watering in winter.

TEMPERATURE Average indoor temperatures are sufficient for *Gynuras*: 60 F to 75 F. Don't let the temperature dip below 50 F.

HUMIDITY Mist *Gynuras* occasionally.

FERTILIZER Feed established plants with a balanced houseplant fertilizer every two weeks. Feed monthly during winter.

PROPAGATION *Gynuras* can be propagated from stem cuttings. Repotting is suggested in the spring. And it is recommended that plants older than two years be replaced with stem cuttings rather than repotted.

challenges

PESTS Aphids may cause *Gynuras*' leaves to pucker or curl. For small infestations, affected leaves can be picked off and put in the trash while the rest of the plant is rinsed thoroughly with warm water. After three days, recheck the plant, and use a cotton swab dipped in soapy water to treat any reappearing pests.

LEAF CONCERNS If the plants' leaves are more green than purple, this is a sign it isn't getting enough light. Dark patches on *Gynuras*' leaves may be caused by water damage—water remaining on the leaves

too long or water droplets burning the leaves after being heated by the sun. The hairs on *Gynuras* tend to trap water. Avoid wetting the leaves when watering, and after misting or washing the plant, set it in a shady place to dry.



G. aurantiaca 'Purple Passion' — Purple velvet plant



G. aurantiaca — Purple velvet plant

fun facts

WHAT'S IN A NAME The name *Gynura* comes from the Greek words "gyne," meaning "woman" or "female," and "oura," meaning "tail," referring to the plants' long, rough stigmas.

FAMILY *Gynura* plants are members of the Asteraceae, or Compositae, (Aster, composite or sunflower) family. Common relatives include *Ageratums* (flossflowers), *Asters*, *Zinnias*, chrysanthemums (*Dendranthemas*), *Liatrises* (gayfeathers) and *Cosmos*.

HOME SWEET HOME The plants are native to an area from Africa to Malaysia.

PUNGENT FLOWERS Dandelionlike yellow flowers often bloom after the plants reach one year old, but these flowers have an unpleasant odor and so are best pinched off. Blooming is often a sign of plant maturity and may signal that the plant will begin to decline; this is a good time to take stem cuttings.

FLORAL COMPLEMENTS *The Complete Houseplant Survival Manual* advises that *Gynuras* look nice when combined with other plants in containers and also when backlit by the sun. The purple coloring also makes the plants great companions for those with chartreuse leaves or pink flowers. **sfr**

Some information provided by:
Botanica, by R.G. Turner Jr. and Ernie Wasson
The Chain of Life Network®, www.chainoflifenetworg.org
The Complete Houseplant Survival Manual,
by Barbara Pleasant
The House Plant Expert, by Dr. D.G. Hessayon

Reach "Foliage Plant of the Month" writer Amy Bauer at abauer@superfloralretailing.com or (800) 355-8086.