

<p>Family: NYCTAGINACEAE Genus: <i>Mirabilis</i> Species: <i>jalapa</i> Cvs or ssp:</p>	<p>Proper name: <i>Mirabilis jalapa</i> Medievally known as: <i>Mirabilis</i> Common Name: <i>Mirabilis</i>, Marvel of Peru, Four o'clock Plant</p>
<p>Average Size: approximately 90cm,</p>	<p>Origin: Peruvian Andes</p>
<p>Distinctive Features: tuberous root, leaves are opposite & simple with entire margins, ovate to oblong with an acute tip & cordate base. Born on a 4cm petiole. Flowers are in leaf axils & salverform with 5 petals. It produces single seeded spherical black (when mature) & wrinkled fruit.</p>	<p>Habit: bushy, typically annual it can perennialise in a warm climate & can become a weed. Conservation status: worldwide spread</p>
<p>Aspect: full sun is best but will tolerate minor shade</p>	<p>Soils: prefers 200m to 2150m altitude, will tolerate most soils but prefers an organic rich moist well-drained soils. Tolerant of pH.</p>
<p>Pruning: not required, but will keep compact.</p>	<p>Pests & diseases: very few</p>
<p>Usefulness: folk medicine uses the juice of the plant to treat wounds. Can be used for bioremediation of soils polluted with heavy metals such as cadmium. Attractive garden display. Material dye at 60-70°C using copper or ferrous sulphate as a mordant.</p>	<p>Propagation: easy by seed or tuber division, tubers will over-winter in soil & regrow next year.</p>
<p>Culinary use: flowers are used in food colouring as a red dye for jellies & cakes. Prepare by boiling 1gm of flower to 100ml water & straining through 2 layers of scoured muslin fabric.</p>	<p>Special features: different coloured flowers can be seen on the same plant, some single flowers have more than one colour, flowers can change colour as they age (eg yellow can change to dark pink & white to violet). Flowers open in the late afternoon, produce a sweet fragrance all night & then close in the morning. May stay open on cloudy days. New flowers open next day.</p>
<p>Notes: Its properties as a dye meant that it is believed to have reached Europe as early as 1540 making it one of the earliest cultivars to make the trip. Seeds & roots are mildly poisonous. Frost tender.</p>	<p>Comments: This was in the 1st planting on 2/12/14. This plant was included because of its reputed use as a dye (red). The challenge is to use the plant to colour material which may then be used to make clothes or on paper which may then be used to colour paper & perhaps as ink. Results of testing will be advised in another section of the website. It will be interesting to see if the plants come back for the next season so we can get more flowers to test.</p>

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