

## ***Hibiscus acetosella* 'Sahara Sunset'<sup>®</sup>**

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The Agricultural Research Service, United States Department of Agriculture, has released a new African hibiscus, *Hibiscus acetosella* Welw. ex Hiern., named 'Sahara Sunset' (USPP #21,765). This cultivar, tested as HAC06-11, was selected from a group of seedlings grown at the Thad Cochran Southern Horticultural Laboratory in Poplarville, Mississippi. Seedlings were produced from seed of open-pollinated purple-leaf *Hibiscus acetosella* which were irradiated with a cobalt-60 source. The original seedling of 'Sahara Sunset' was selected in 2006. It is the first stable variegated form of the purple-leaf form of this species.

'Sahara Sunset' is a tropical shrub (USDA Cold Hardiness Zone 10), grown as an annual for the beauty of its colorful maple-like leaves. Plants of 'Sahara Sunset' are moderately vigorous, have a spreading upright growth habit, and have unique multicolored ornamental foliage. When grown as an annual, it can reach 2 m tall by the end of summer if grown under optimum conditions without pruning. 'Sahara Sunset' has small, insignificant purple flowers induced by short days.

'Sahara Sunset' is well suited to a range of landscape uses such as a specimen plant, a color accent in shrub borders, a contrast plant in mixed annual planters, a background planting in perennial beds, and as a summer hedge. Plants perform best in full sun with moderate moisture and fertility. Its broad environmental adaptation and tolerance of common insects and diseases make it an ideal plant for low maintenance plantings.