

***Strelitzia reginae* Bird of Paradise¹**

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Introduction

Bird of paradise is grown as much for its handsome, bluegreen tropical foliage as for the distinctive flowers that appear periodically throughout the year (Fig. 1). This slow-growing, clumping perennial resembles the related heliconia in vegetative appearance. Although best growth and flower production occurs in California and Hawaii, enough flowers develop under Florida landscape conditions to warrant planting. Flowers are produced on a stiff stem that rises above the foliage and are contained in orange and blue, boat-shaped bracts to produce a lovely effect in any landscape.

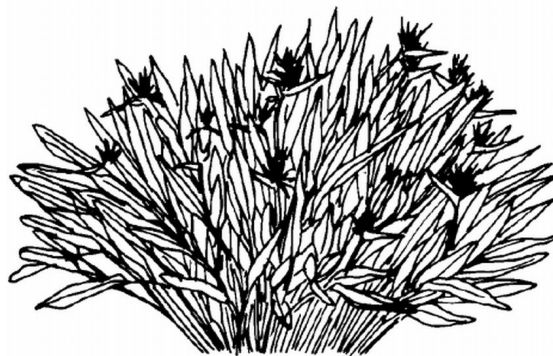


Figure 1. Bird of paradise

General Information

Scientific name: *Strelitzia reginae*

Pronunciation: strell-LITZ-zee-uh ree-JIN-nee

Common name(s): bird of paradise

Family: *Strelitziaceae*

Plant type: herbaceous

USDA hardiness zones: 10 through 11 (Fig. 2)

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: mass planting; specimen; container or above-ground planter; accent

Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Description

Height: 3 to 5 feet

Spread: 2 to 4 feet

Plant habit: upright

Plant density: moderate

Growth rate: slow

Texture: coarse

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: most emerge from the soil, usually without a stem

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: undulate

Leaf shape: oblong

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen

Leaf blade length: 12 to 18 inches

Leaf color: blue or blue-green

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: orange-blue

Flower characteristic: spring flowering; summer flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: irregular

Fruit length: less than .5 inch

Fruit cover: dry or hard

Fruit color: orange

Fruit characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: typically multi-trunked or clumping stems

Current year stem/twig color: not applicable

Current year stem/twig thickness: not applicable

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun

Soil tolerances: occasionally wet; clay; sand; acidic; loam; slightly alkaline

Drought tolerance: high

Soil salt tolerances: poor

Plant spacing: 24 to 36 inches

Other

Roots: not applicable

Winter interest: no special winter interest

Outstanding plant: plant has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more

Invasive potential: not known to be invasive

Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests

Use and Management

One full-grown specimen makes a dramatic landscape accent, with plants spreading as wide as they are tall. Mass plantings on 3- to 5-foot centers are effective in large gardens. Locate plants in a low-growing ground cover or in front of a shrub border to contrast the blue-green foliage with the green of other shrubs.

Developing into large clumps, bird of paradise needs full sun or high, shifting shade and rich, moisture-retentive soil. Plants should be fertilized regularly during the growing season.

Propagation is by seed or division, although plants seem to flower more freely under crowded conditions and are best left undisturbed. Many nursery operators report that the seeds are difficult to germinate.

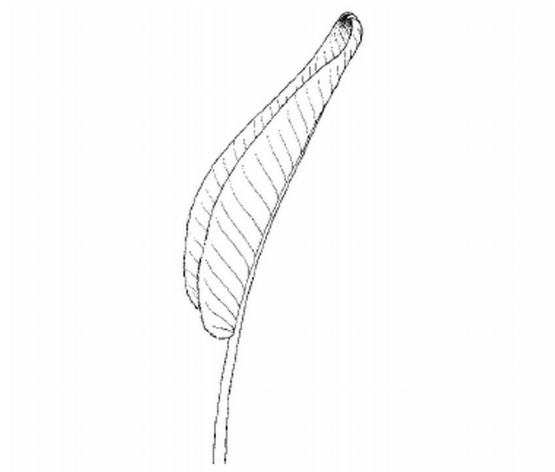


Figure 3. Foliage of bird of paradise

Pests and Diseases

Scale is the main pest problem, though grasshoppers may occasionally ruin the foliage.