Strelitzia reginae

Edward F. Gilman

Introduction

Bird-of-Paradise is grown as much for its handsome blue-green tropical foliage as for the distinctive flowers which 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 a orange and blue, boat-shaped bracts to produce a lovely effect in any landscape.

General Information

Scientific name: *Strelitzia reginae*
Pronunciation: strel-LITZ-ee-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

Description

Height: 3 to 5 feet
Spread: 2 to 4 feet
Plant habit: upright
Plant density: moderate
Growth rate: slow
Texture: coarse

Figure 1. Bird-of-Paradise.
Strelitzia reginae -- Bird-of-Paradise

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

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

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

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
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 against 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.

**Pests and Diseases**

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