



# *Strelitzia nicolai* White Bird-of-Paradise<sup>1</sup>

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson<sup>2</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

White Bird-of-Paradise is most often planted for its large, banana-like leaves and upright, clumping stalks which give an exotic feel to the landscape (Fig. 1). Plants can reach 20 to 30 feet in height with a spread of 10 feet though they are often seen much smaller. The five to eight-foot-long, cold-tender leaves are arranged in a fanlike display from the erect trunks and appear much like Traveler's-Tree. The lower trunk becomes clear of leaves and exposed as the older leaves drop off. Leaves rip along the veins as they are blown by strong winds.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

**Scientific name:** *Strelitzia nicolai*

**Pronunciation:** streh-LIT-see-uh NICK-oh-lye

**Common name(s):** White Bird-of-Paradise, Giant Bird-of-Paradise

**Family:** *Strelitziaceae*

**USDA hardiness zones:** 9B through 11 (Fig. 2)

**Origin:** not native to North America

**Uses:** container or above-ground planter; suitable for growing indoors; near a deck or patio; specimen; no proven urban tolerance

**Availability:** generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

## DESCRIPTION

**Height:** 20 to 30 feet

**Spread:** 6 to 10 feet

**Crown uniformity:** irregular outline or silhouette

**Crown shape:** palm; upright

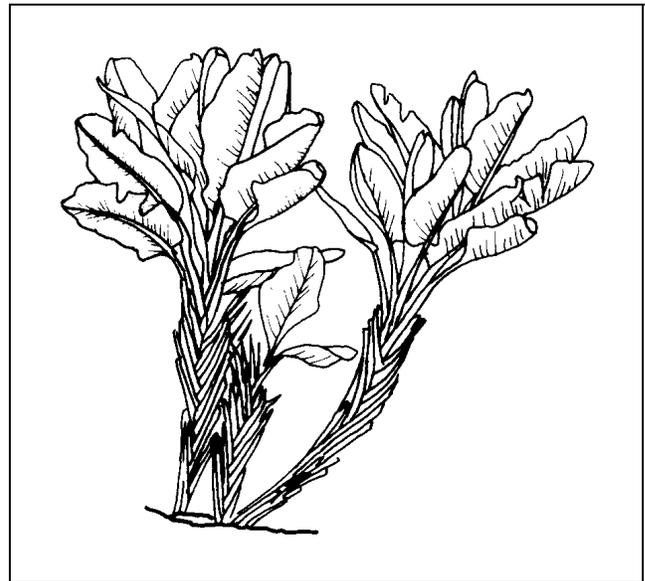


Figure 1. Middle-aged White Bird-of-Paradise.

**Crown density:** open

**Growth rate:** medium

**Texture:** coarse

## Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate (Fig. 3)

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** entire

**Leaf shape:** oblong

**Leaf venation:** pinnate

**Leaf type and persistence:** broadleaf evergreen; evergreen

**Leaf blade length:** >36 inches

**Leaf color:** green

1. This document is adapted from Fact Sheet ST-604, a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: October 1994.
2. Edward F. Gilman, associate professor, Environmental Horticulture Department; Dennis G. Watson, associate professor, Agricultural Engineering Department, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville FL 32611.



Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**Fall color:** no fall color change

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

**Flower**

**Flower color:** white

**Flower characteristics:** showy; year round flowering

**Fruit**

**Fruit covering:** dry or hard

**Fruit color:** brown

**Fruit characteristics:** does not attract wildlife; inconspicuous and not showy; fruit, twigs, or foliage cause significant litter

**Trunk and Branches**

**Trunk/bark/branches:** routinely grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple trunks; grow mostly upright and will not droop; showy trunk; no thorns

**Pruning requirement:** needs little pruning to develop a strong structure

**Breakage:** resistant

**Crown shaft:** no

**Culture**

**Light requirement:** tree grows in part shade/part sun; tree grows in full sun

**Soil tolerances:** clay; loam; sand; slightly alkaline; acidic; well-drained

**Drought tolerance:** moderate

**Aerosol salt tolerance:** low

**Soil salt tolerance:** poor

**Other**

**Roots:** surface roots are usually not a problem

**Winter interest:** no special winter interest

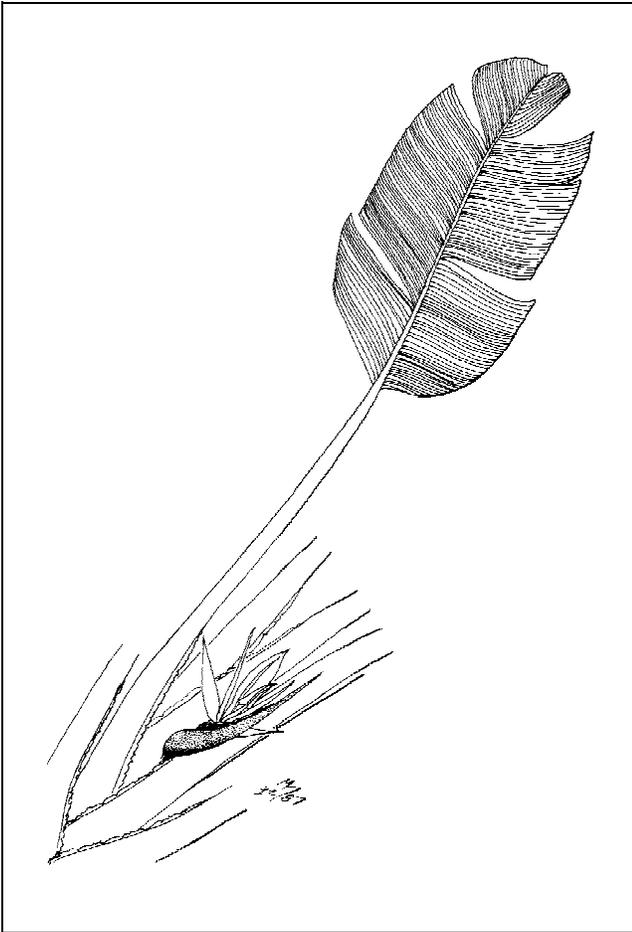
**Outstanding tree:** not particularly outstanding

**Invasive potential:** little, if any, potential at this time

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

**USE AND MANAGEMENT**

The interesting flowers are white with a dark blue tongue. White Bird-of-Paradise is ideal for entranceways for a dramatic effect or for use at poolside. Plants are not messy but ragged leaves should be periodically removed for a tidy appearance.



**Figure 3.** Foliage of White Bird-of-Paradise.

This is a large plant and should be situated accordingly.

White Bird-of-Paradise grows well in full sun to light shade on moist, well-drained soil. Plants should be protected from high winds to minimize torn, ragged leaves. It will survive periods of 28-degrees F. with minimal leaf burn and will quickly recover. Prune to remove dead leaves and thin out surplus growth sprouting from the base of the trunk, if you wish.

Propagation is by division of the suckers or from seed which germinate slowly.

### **Pests**

Scales may infest this tree.

### **Diseases**

No diseases are of major concern.