

Delonix regia Royal Poinciana¹

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INTRODUCTION

This many-branched, broad, spreading, flat-crowned deciduous tree is well-known for its brilliant display of red-orange bloom, literally covering the tree tops from May to July (Fig. 1). There is nothing like a Royal Poinciana (or better yet, a group of them) in full bloom. The fine, soft, delicate leaflets afford dappled shade during the remainder of the growing season, making Royal Poinciana a favorite shade tree or freestanding specimens in large, open lawns. The tree is often broader than tall, growing about 40 feet high and 60 feet wide. Trunks can become as large as 50 inches or more in diameter. Eighteen-inch-long, dark brown seed pods hang on the tree throughout the winter, then fall on the ground in spring creating a nuisance.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Delonix regia*

Pronunciation: dee-LOE-nicks REE-jee-uh

Common name(s): Royal Poinciana

Family: *Leguminosae*

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

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: reclamation plant; shade tree; specimen; residential street tree; tree has been successfully grown in urban areas where air pollution, poor drainage, compacted soil, and/or drought are common

Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

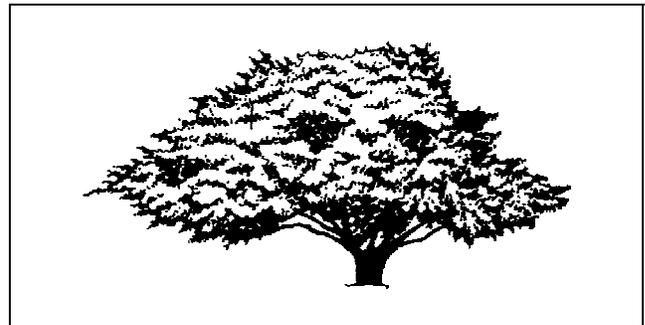


Figure 1. Mature Royal Poinciana.

DESCRIPTION

Height: 35 to 40 feet

Spread: 40 to 60 feet

Crown uniformity: symmetrical canopy with a regular (or smooth) outline, and individuals have more or less identical crown forms

Crown shape: spreading; vase shape

Crown density: moderate

Growth rate: fast

Texture: fine

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: bipinnately compound

Leaflet margin: entire

Leaflet shape: oblong

Leaf type and persistence: semievergreen

Leaflet blade length: less than 2 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Flower

Flower color: orange; red

Flower characteristics: summer flowering; very showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: elongated; pod

Fruit length: 12 inches or more

Fruit covering: dry or hard

Fruit color: brown

Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; fruit, twigs, or foliage cause significant litter; persistent on the tree; showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: droop as the tree grows, and will require pruning for vehicular or pedestrian clearance beneath the canopy; routinely grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple trunks; not particularly showy; no thorns

Pruning requirement: requires pruning to develop strong structure

Breakage: susceptible to breakage either at the crotch due to poor collar formation, or the wood itself is weak and tends to break

Current year twig color: brown; green

Current year twig thickness: medium; thick

Culture

Light requirement: tree grows in full sun

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

Drought tolerance: high

Aerosol salt tolerance: low

Other

Roots: surface roots can lift sidewalks or interfere with mowing

Winter interest: no special winter interest

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

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

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

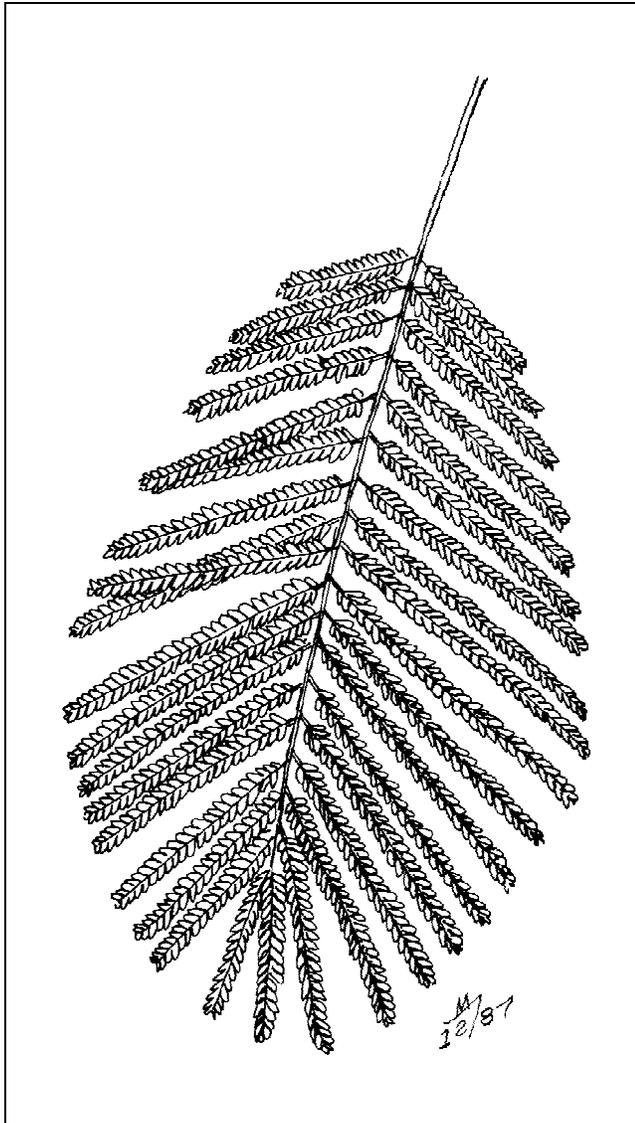


Figure 3. Foliage of Royal Poinciana.

from growing to more than half the diameter of the trunk.

Propagation is by seed.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern although caterpillars can eat some foliage. There is a root fungus which can kill a weakened tree.

USE AND MANAGEMENT

Royal Poinciana will provide fullest flowering and best growth when planted in full sun locations. Tolerant of a wide variety of soils and conditions, Royal Poinciana needs to be well-watered until established, then only during the severest droughts. Grass grows poorly beneath poinciana. Do not plant closer than about 10 feet from pavement or sidewalks, since large surface roots often grow beneath them and can destroy them. Early pruning is required to encourage development of branches which are well-attached to the trunk. This will help compensate for the weak wood. Train the tree so the major limbs are located 8 to 12 feet from the ground to allow for adequate clearance beneath the tree. To develop a strong, durable tree, prune major limbs to prevent them