



Strelitzia nicolai White Bird-of-Paradise¹

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson²

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

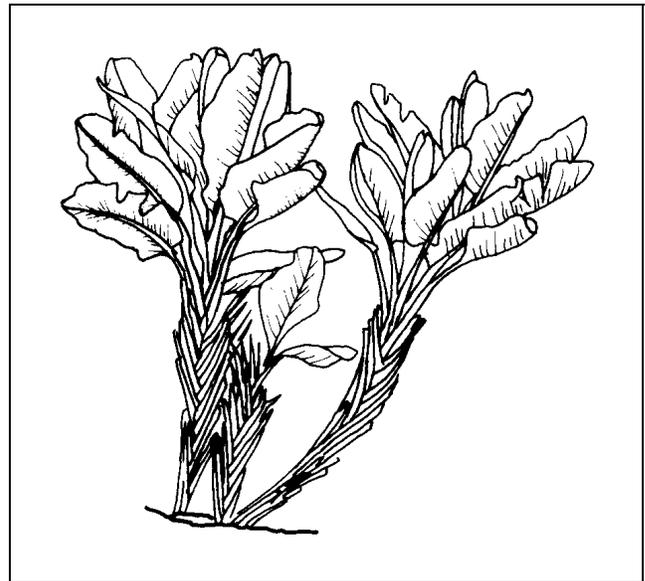


Figure 1. Middle-aged White Bird-of-Paradise.

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

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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.

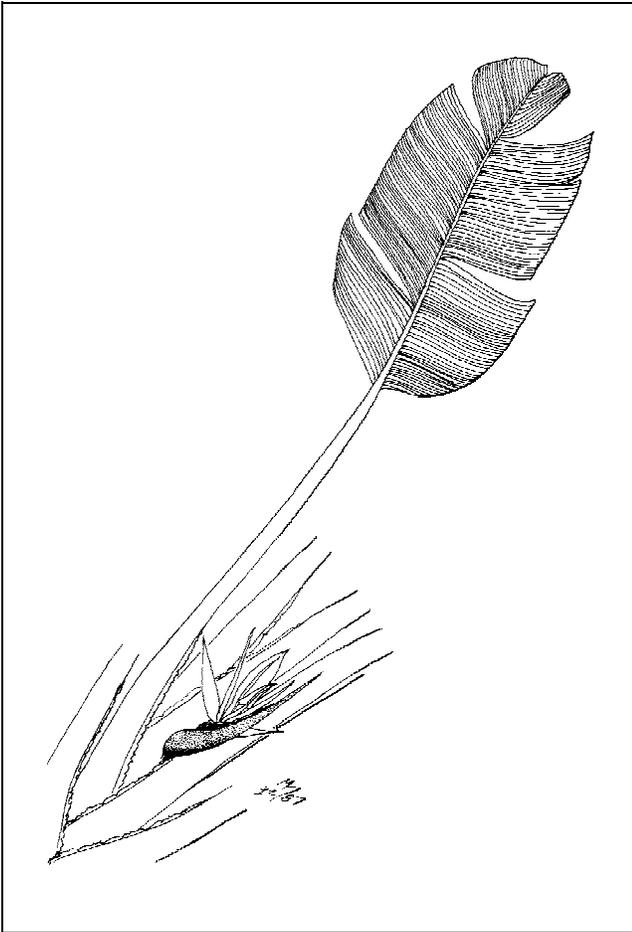


Figure 3. Foliage of White Bird-of-Paradise.

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.