



# *Delonix regia* Royal Poinciana<sup>1</sup>

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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

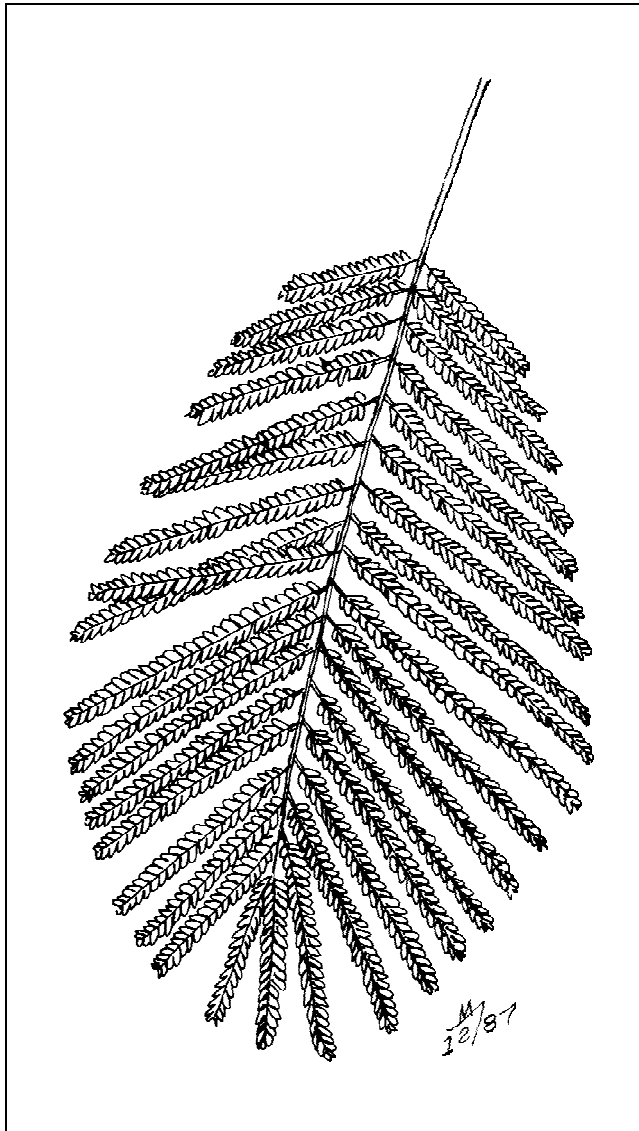
**Roots:** surface roots can lift sidewalks or interfere with mowing

**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