

City of Plantation Landscape Architecture presents ...

Plant of the Quarter



The Royal Poinciana, is botanically known as *Delonix regia*. A more descriptive name is 'Flamboyant tree' or 'Flame tree' (as it is referred to in the Tropics). It is truly one of the most exciting trees with its riotous summer color. I first saw this tree in Puerto Rico, as a northerner vacationing in the tropics. I thought the tree was on fire. I took picture after picture of this strange and beautiful tree. Living in south Florida now I am more accustomed to brilliant colors and exaggerated foliage. However, this tree has earned and deserves our attention this quarter.

It is a native of Madagascar but finds its home throughout the tropics and in the warmest, frost free areas in South Florida. Describing this tree would be a poem's dream, rich with descriptive words. I like Georgia Tasker's, garden writer for the Miami Herald, description, "A cascading canopy that is supported by fat, yet languid, limbs on a stout trunk. The canopies shimmer beneath clouds of cerise, scarlet, blood red...."

A brief summary of this species:

Habit/ Height/ Spread Royal Poincianas are graceful, wide spreading trees much wider than they are tall. Its rounded top and downturned branches that can touch the ground contribute to its gracefulness and royalty. The height can reach 40' with a spread of 100'. It is more common to see this species reach 25' with a spread of 50'. It is a fast to moderately fast grower unless pushed. It is tolerant of our poor soils and withstands both drought and wet conditions (however, it can not tolerate constant flooding). Site it in full sun.

Foliage/ Flowers/ Fruit The tree will lose its leaves (deciduous) in the winter, or with a drought. The leaves are held on bi-pinnate petioles. Each leaflet is tiny giving the overall appearance of a beautiful, delicate, fern-like tree.

The flowers are spectacular! They are 2- 3" overall with 5 petals: 4 spatulate of solid tones of oranges and reds and the fifth is yellow or white with flecks of crimson. The trees produces a dark brown pod 2" x 2" long.

Use and Management This is a lovely tree to admire from a distance, in a park, in a large open area. It will fill a large space beautifully and a small yard like a pair of shoes 3 sizes too small. It will never be comfortable in one of our small sized yards. Continual pruning deprives it of its genetic potential (big, big, big) and makes it look contrived. The new wood grows back rapidly and breaks off easily in a storm. Alas, another disadvantage for us homeowners....it is messy! It drops everything from leaves to flowers to pods to brittle branches. As if that is not enough, the seedling germinate readily. Its roots lie close to the ground or slightly raised making this a nuisance for breaking asphalt and a potential trip hazard.

Problems The Royal Poinciana has no real from problems from insects or disease or fungus.

Recommendation Admire and encourage their planting in large, open spaces. We have planted many throughout our parks. This is a great place to enjoy them.



Good luck and happy botanizing!