

Heliconia rostrata Lobster Claw¹

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Introduction

Lobster-claw is an herbaceous perennial with leathery, dark green leaves which are borne on long petioles arising directly from the ground (Fig. 1). It has 3- to 5-foot-tall stems terminated by a drooping inflorescence. The flowers hang in showy clusters that emerge from second year stalks. They are enclosed by scarlet and yellow colored bracts that are 6 to 8 inches long. This unique plant is used as a specimen for tropical gardens. The inflorescence may be cut for indoor decoration where they last for several weeks.

General Information

Scientific name: *Heliconia rostrata*

Pronunciation: hel-lick-KOE-nee-uh ros-STRAY-tuh

Common name(s): Lobster-Claw

Family: *Heliconiaceae*

Plant type: herbaceous

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

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: cut flowers; suitable for growing indoors

Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant

Description

Height: 5 to 6 feet

Spread: 3 to 6 feet

Plant habit: upright

Plant density: open

Growth rate: fast

Texture: coarse

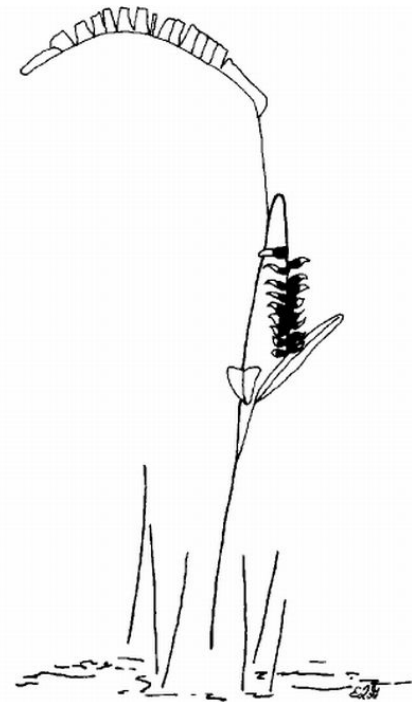


Figure 1. Lobster-Claw.

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: ovate

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen

Leaf blade length: more than 36 inches

1. This document is FPS248, one of a series of the Environmental Horticulture, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Original publication date October 1999. Revised May 2007. Reviewed June 2011. Visit the EDIS website at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Leaf color: green
Fall color: no fall color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: yellow
Flower characteristic: spring flowering; summer flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: unknown
Fruit length: unknown
Fruit cover: unknown
Fruit color: blue
Fruit characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: typically multi-trunked or clumping stems
Current year stem/twig color: green
Current year stem/twig thickness: thick

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun
Soil tolerances: acidic; alkaline; sand; loam; clay;
Drought tolerance: moderate
Soil salt tolerances: moderate
Plant spacing: 36 to 60 inches

Other

Roots: not applicable
Winter interest: no special winter interest
Outstanding plant: plant has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more
Invasive potential: not known to be invasive
Pest resistance: very sensitive to one or more pests or diseases which can affect plant health or aesthetics

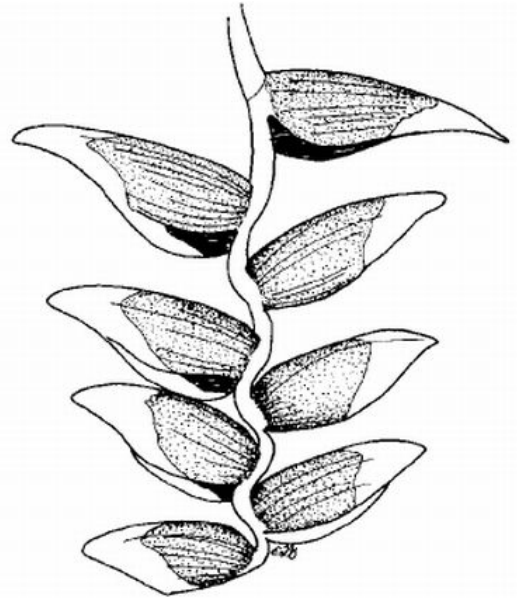


Figure 3. Flower of Lobster-Claw

Use and Management

Lobster-claw will prosper in locations that receive full or partial sun. It grows and flowers best in fertile, moist soil. Fertilize this plant regularly during the growing season.

Propagation is by division of the matted clumps.

Pests and Diseases

None are usually serious. This plant may be bothered by Cercospora and Helminthosporium leaf spots. Scales and nematodes may also cause problems.