

# *Heliconia rostrata* Lobster Claw<sup>1</sup>

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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.

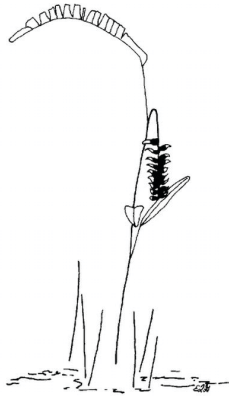


Figure 1. Lobster claw.

## 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



Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

## Description

**Height:** 5 to 6 feet

**Spread:** 3 to 6 feet

**Plant habit:** upright

**Plant density:** open

**Growth rate:** fast

**Texture:** coarse

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## 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

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** no fall color change

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

## Flower

**Flower color:** yellow

**Flower characteristic:** spring flowering; summer flowering

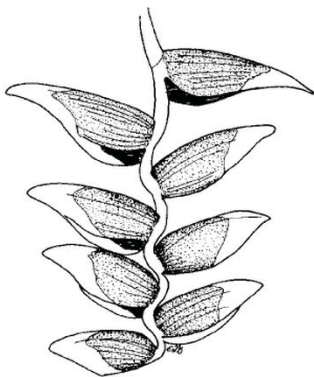


Figure 3. Flower of lobster claw.

## 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

## 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.