

# *Strelitzia reginae* Bird of Paradise<sup>1</sup>

Edward F. Gilman<sup>2</sup>

## Introduction

Bird of paradise is grown as much for its handsome, bluegreen tropical foliage as for the distinctive flowers that appear periodically throughout the year (Fig. 1). This slow-growing, clumping perennial resembles the related heliconia in vegetative appearance. Although best growth and flower production occurs in California and Hawaii, enough flowers develop under Florida landscape conditions to warrant planting. Flowers are produced on a stiff stem that rises above the foliage and are contained in orange and blue, boat-shaped bracts to produce a lovely effect in any landscape.



Figure 1. Bird of paradise

## General Information

**Scientific name:** *Strelitzia reginae*

**Pronunciation:** strell-LITZ-zee-uh ree-JIN-nee

**Common name(s):** bird of paradise

**Family:** *Strelitziaceae*

**Plant type:** herbaceous

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

**Planting month for zone 10 and 11:** year round

**Origin:** not native to North America

**Uses:** mass planting; specimen; container or above-ground planter; accent

**Availability:** generally available in many areas within its hardiness range



Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

## Description

**Height:** 3 to 5 feet

**Spread:** 2 to 4 feet

**Plant habit:** upright

**Plant density:** moderate

**Growth rate:** slow

**Texture:** coarse

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2. Edward F. Gilman, professor, Environmental Horticulture Department; UF/IFAS Extension, Gainesville, FL 32611.

## Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** most emerge from the soil, usually without a stem

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** undulate

**Leaf shape:** oblong

**Leaf venation:** pinnate

**Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen

**Leaf blade length:** 12 to 18 inches

**Leaf color:** blue or blue-green

**Fall color:** no fall color change

**Fall characteristic:** not showy



Figure 3. Foliage of bird of paradise.

## Flower

**Flower color:** orange-blue

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

## Fruit

**Fruit shape:** irregular

**Fruit length:** less than .5 inch

**Fruit cover:** dry or hard

**Fruit color:** orange

**Fruit characteristic:** inconspicuous and not showy

## Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/bark/branches:** typically multi-trunked or clumping stems

**Current year stem/twig color:** not applicable

**Current year stem/twig thickness:** not applicable

## Culture

**Light requirement:** plant grows in part shade/part sun

**Soil tolerances:** occasionally wet; clay; sand; acidic; loam; slightly alkaline

**Drought tolerance:** high

**Soil salt tolerances:** poor

**Plant spacing:** 24 to 36 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:** long-term health usually not affected by pests

## Use and Management

One full-grown specimen makes a dramatic landscape accent, with plants spreading as wide as they are tall. Mass plantings on 3- to 5-foot centers are effective in large gardens. Locate plants in a low-growing ground cover or in front of a shrub border to contrast the blue-green foliage with the green of other shrubs.

Developing into large clumps, bird of paradise needs full sun or high, shifting shade and rich, moisture-retentive soil. Plants should be fertilized regularly during the growing season.

Propagation is by seed or division, although plants seem to flower more freely under crowded conditions and are best left undisturbed. Many nursery operators report that the seeds are difficult to germinate.

## Pests and Diseases

Scale is the main pest problem, though grasshoppers may occasionally ruin the foliage.