

Delonixregia



Tree in full bloom in
the Florida Keys

Scientific classification

Kingdom: Plantae

(unranked): Angiosperms

(unranked): Eudicots

(unranked): Rosids

Order: Fabales

Family: Fabaceae

Subfamily: Caesalpinioideae

Genus: Delonix

Species: D. regia

Binomial name

Delonixregia
(Boj. ex Hook.) Raf.

Description

The tree's vivid red/vermillion/orange/yellow flowers and bright green foliage make it an exceptionally striking sight.

The Royal Poinciana is found in Madagascar's dry deciduous forests. In the wild it is endangered, but it is widely cultivated elsewhere. In addition to its ornamental value, it is also a useful shade tree in tropical conditions, because it usually grows to a modest height (mostly 5 meters, but it can reach a maximum height of 12 meters) but spreads widely, and its dense foliage provides full shade. In areas with a marked dry season, it sheds its leaves during the drought, but in other areas it is virtually evergreen. Flowers appear in corymbs along and at the ends of branches. Pods are green and flaccid when young and turn dark-brown and woody.

The flowers are large, with four spreading scarlet or orange-red petals up to 8 cm long, and a fifth upright petal called the standard, which is slightly larger and spotted with yellow and white. The naturally occurring variety *flavida* has yellow flowers.^[2] Seed pods are dark brown and can be up to 60 cm long and 5 cm wide; the individual seeds, however, are small, weighing around 0.4 g on average. The compound leaves have a feathery appearance and are a characteristic light, bright green. They are doubly pinnate: Each leaf is 30–50 cm long and has 20 to 40 pairs of primary leaflets or pinnae on it, and each of these is further divided into 10-20 pairs of secondary leaflets or pinnules.



Flower, leaves & pods in Kolkata, West Bengal, India.



In Bangalore, Karnataka, India



Flamboyant tree



The Royal Poinciana



Delonix regia is endemic to the western forests of Madagascar, but has been introduced into tropical and sub-tropical regions worldwide. In the continental United States, it grows in South Florida, Southwest Florida, the



Royal Poinciana seeds after soaking them in water for 6 days

The Royal Poinciana is regarded as naturalised in many of the locations where it is grown. It is a popular street tree in the suburbs of Brisbane, Australia. The tree is also found in India and Pakistan, where it is referred to as the Gulmohar, or Gul Mohr.^[6] In West Bengal (India) and Bangladesh it is called Krishnachura.

The town of Peñuelas, Puerto Rico, located about 12 miles west of Ponce, is nicknamed "El Valle de los Flamboyanes" ("The Valley of the Poinciana Trees"), as many Flamboyant trees are found along the surrounding Río Guyanes, Río Macana, and Río Tallaboa Rivers.

In Vietnam, this tree is called "Phượng vĩ", or phoenix's tail, and is a popular urban tree in much of Vietnam. Its flowering season is May - July, which coincides with the end of the school year in Vietnam. Because of this timing, the flower of Poinciana is sometimes called the "flower of pupil". HaiPhong city is nicknamed "Thành phố hoa phượng đỏ" ("City of red Poinciana").

Propagation

The Royal Poinciana is most commonly propagated by seeds. Seeds are collected, soaked in warm water for at least 24 hours, and planted in warm, moist soil in a semi-shaded, sheltered position. In lieu of soaking, the seeds can also be 'knicked' or 'pinched' (with a small scissors or nail clipper) and planted immediately. These two methods allow moisture to penetrate the tough outer casing, stimulating germination. The seedlings grow rapidly and can reach 30cm in a few weeks under ideal conditions.

Less common, but just as effective, is propagation by semi-hardwood cuttings. Branches consisting of the current or last season's growth can be cut into 30cm sections and planted in a moist potting mixture. This method is slower than seed propagation (cuttings take a few months to root) but is the preferred method for ensuring new trees are true to form. As such, cuttings are a particularly common method of propagation for the rarer yellow-flowering variety of the tree.



Royal poinciana in Martin County, Florida, May

