

Strelitzia reginae - Growing Guide

Growing Strelitzia Reginae

Bird of Paradise

Exotic flower arrangements often feature the flowers of *Strelitzia reginae* commonly called the Crane Flower or Bird of Paradise plant although the latter common name refers to other species of *Strelitzia* as well as *S. reginae*. Despite its exotic nature this is a plant which is easy to grow albeit only in the greenhouse or conservatory. It is consistently one of the top selling conservatory plants for Burncoose and both small and large plants are usually on offer.

S. reginae originates from the South African bush where it grows on riverbanks or in open glades. These are clump forming perennial plants which can grow up to 4ft or more in height with a 3ft spread eventually. The leaf blades are oblong and lance shaped and the flowers may be up to 6ft tall.

The tall flower spikes can appear irregularly from winter to spring and even smallish plants are quite capable of producing small flower spikes. The flower heads or spathes are purple and orange-flushed green. The flowers themselves, when they open, have orange or yellowish crest-like calyces and a blue corolla. A very startling colour combination from which the common names for these plants are richly deserved. The flowers are very long lasting on the plant and when used in flower arrangements.

Strelitzia are frost tender although, at Burncoose, we do not give them additional heat in winter and they will happily survive -5° perhaps with a little blackening along the leaf edges. They are greedy plants requiring large pots and potting on at least every second year. Water sparingly in winter and apply a liquid fertiliser monthly in the spring and summer. A loam based potting compost is best.

Although these plants should enjoy full light they can scorch in direct sunlight in the greenhouse so some shading is advisable. Good air flow and ventilation is also needed. If the plants do get a scale insect infestation move them outside for a few weeks while treating the problem.

Strelitzia are most easily propagated by division. When potting on clumps in spring the side shoots or side suckers can readily be separated from the main plant and will usually have a few roots already present. If not the offsets will still root quickly on bottom heat.

One of the plants pictured here was growing and flowering outside at Ventnor Botanic Garden on the Isle of Wight.



S.reginae outside in summer



Strelitzia reginae



Strelitzia reginae



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View this video on Youtube here <https://www.youtube.com/ZsE01zr5hQQ>

