

# THE PRIDE OF BARBADOS – ONE PLANT, MANY NAMES

Some plants have so many common names that it becomes a bit confusing to know what plant we are talking about. Take the Pride of Barbados or *Caesalpinia pulcherrima* for example. In addition to the Pride of Barbados (the name I was familiar with), this plant is also called the Peacock flower, Dwarf Poinciana, Mexican Bird of Paradise, Barbados flower-fence, and the Red Bird of Paradise. A member of the pea family, the Pride of Barbados is a small evergreen to deciduous tree that produces outstanding yellow, orange and red flowers. Suitable for our area, the Pride of Barbados is becoming a popular landscape choice.

The Pride of Barbados is originally found in the West Indies and other parts of tropical America. Growing up to 15 feet tall with fern-like leaves and some sharp spines, the Pride of Barbados is best known for its two to three inch flowers. The flowers are a combination of five wavy red and yellow-orange petals and 10 red stamens that develop at the end of branches. Some cultivars have pure yellow, pink or red flowers. The flowers are followed by flat brown bean pods. The toxic seeds produced can be planted to grow new plants. They germinate best if the seeds are scarified or nicked before planting.

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Depending on our weather (frosts) the flowers may appear year round or just in the late summer and early fall. Even if a freeze kills the plant back to the ground, it will grow back and flower as warm weather returns. The Pride of Barbados does best in a full-sun, well-drained area. Once established, this plant is drought tolerant and survives in poor soil in a wide range of pH conditions.

The Pride of Barbados can make a great informal screen or hedge as well as a single specimen plant. In addition, beyond the attractiveness of the flowers, butterflies and hummingbirds also enjoy the flowers. This woody plant can also be pruned into a small tree and should

do well as a median planting. Sometimes the branches get out of bounds and grow too long. You can severely prune the plant in winter or very early spring which will result in a more compact plant.

I have seen several Pride of Barbados plants growing well in surrounding Charlotte County landscapes. I have also seen this plant for sale at local garden centers and nurseries. If you see one, you will want one!

#### Resources:

- Garafalo, J. & McLaughlin, J. (2002) *Caesalpinia, The Other Birds-of-Paradise*. Miami-Dade County UF/IFAS Extension Service.
- Christman, S. (2000) *Caesalpinia pulcherrima*. *Floridata* - Tallahassee, Florida.
- Rodriguez, D. (2006) "Pride of Barbados" A Great Heat Loving Plant and Future Texas SuperStar. Texas A & M University System, Texas Cooperative Extension of Bexar County.

Ralph Mitchell is the Extension Director/Horticulture Agent for Charlotte County UF/IFAS Extension Service. Ralph can be reached at 941.764.4344 or by email: [Ralph.Mitchell@CharlotteFL.com](mailto:Ralph.Mitchell@CharlotteFL.com).

*For more information about our Florida Yards and Neighborhoods Program, please contact our FYN Horticulture Program Assistant Allison Turner at 764.4351 or email [Allison.Turner@CharlotteFL.com](mailto:Allison.Turner@CharlotteFL.com).*

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**RALPH MITCHELL**

**Extension Director/Horticulture Agent**  
[Ralph.Mitchell@CharlotteFL.com](mailto:Ralph.Mitchell@CharlotteFL.com)

**CHARLOTTE COUNTY UF/IFAS EXTENSION SERVICE**

**25550 Harbor View Road, Suite 3 - Port Charlotte, Florida 33980  
941.764.4340 - 941.764.4343 (fax) - <http://charlotte.ifas.ufl.edu>**

