

## TWO POINCIANAS

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Our office often receives questions about this plant or that; especially if they are or have recently been in bloom. One tree that has been blooming from May on through September, with some blooms open even now, is the Yellow Poinciana. Topped with a yellow canopy of flowers, the yellow poinciana is eye-catching to say the least. The Royal Poinciana, another member of the Leguminosae family with tropical, fiery-red flowers, also brings many requests for information when in full bloom during late spring and early summer. Both of these trees, commonly called poincianas, make stunning shade and flowering trees.

Growing up to 50 feet tall and 40 feet wide, the yellow poinciana is a native from the Indo-Pacific region. Introduced into Florida, it has done well in hardiness zones 10 and 11 as a shade and flowering tree. The leaves are fern-like and feathery which produce a pleasant, dappled shade. From May through September, this tree produces an abundance of yellow flowers on 18-inch long stalks. The fragrance from these clustered flowers cannot be missed as it reminds one of grapes. These yellow flowers are followed by three to six-inch long seed pods which turn a dark red color making them ornamental as well.

Yellow poincianas are very fast growing and are best used as specimen trees where a good amount of space can be provided such as in large lawns or municipal parks. Regular pruning and training are needed to keep the yellow poinciana in bounds. In public areas, train this tree into a single trunk with well-spaced branches to increase its ability to tolerate wind. The yellow poinciana does best in well-drained soil in a full sun location. Site the tree away from houses and other targets as shallow surface roots make it more apt to blow-over. Also keep this poinciana 10 or more feet away from sidewalks and pavement as the large roots can damage these structures.

The yellow poinciana is frost sensitive and will drop its leaves if exposed to temperatures in the upper 20's. However, well-established specimens will quickly leaf out again. There are three species of *Peltophorum* including *inermis*, which is best in Zone 10b and *dubium* which is hardy in Zone 9b. *Peltophorum pterocarpum* is the type most commonly found in our area.

The Royal Poinciana or *Delonix regia* is another flowering tree that is very popular considering its brilliant flowers displayed from May to July. This

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Yellow Poinciana

www.wikipedia.com



Royal Poinciana

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“king or queen of flowering trees” has leaves similar to the yellow poinciana with soft feather-like leaflets. The orange-red, very showy flowers are followed by large 18 inch long seed pods that are both decorative and a nuisance to clean up. Growing to 40 feet tall and up to 60 feet wide, this fast-growing semi-evergreen spreading tree has needs and considerations similar to yellow poinciana. Prune and train this tree over the years so that the major limbs are about 12 feet from the ground. Keep branches under control and growing no more than half the diameter of the trunk. Allow plenty of room for this tree and situate it at least 10 feet away from payment or sidewalks in consideration of the roots. Keep the royal poinciana well watered during establishment, but consider it drought-tolerant thereafter. This poinciana is well adapted

to a number of soil conditions. Also, keep in mind that grass does not grow well under the branches of this poinciana. The royal poinciana is cold sensitive to our winter weather and can experience damage. I have particularly noticed its susceptibility to the Asian ambrosia beetle after a freeze. These beetles attack stressed royal poincianas boring into the wood and kicking out strings of sawdust as they work. Keep royal poinciana closer to the coast (but not too close as it has low salt tolerance) or in warmer micro-climates for best long-term success.

These two flowering trees are spectacular and will provide a seasonal display when planted in the right place.

*Resource:*

- Gilman, E.F. & Watson, D.G. ( 1994) *Peltophorum pterocarpum* - Yellow Poinciana. UF/IFAS Extension Service.
- Christman, S. (2000) *Peltophorum pterocarpum*. Floridata.com
- Atkinson, T.H. Foltz, J.L., Wilkinson, R.C. & Mizell, R.F. (2007) Asian ambrosia beetle, granulate ambrosia beetle. Featured Creatures - UF/IFAS Extension Service.

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*For more information about our Florida Yards and Neighborhoods Program, please contact our FYN Horticulture Program Assistant, Allison Steele, at 764.4351 or email [Allison.Turner@CharlotteFL.com](mailto:Allison.Turner@CharlotteFL.com). Allison can help educate you about the FYN Program so you can create a beautiful, Florida-Friendly landscape that saves you time and money while conserving precious water resources and reducing pollution.*

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You can also visit them at one of our many **Plant Clinics** around the county:  
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