FPS-247



Heliconia caribaea Caribbaean heliconia, Wild Plantain¹

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Introduction

The Wild Plantain is an herbaceous perennial with leathery, dark green leaves which are borne on long petioles arising directly from the ground (Fig. 1). The Wild Plantain has no trunk or stems but manages to grow 10 to 15 feet tall due to the enormous leaves. The attractive petioles are usually 4 to 5 feet long, and the leaf blade is equally as long. The flowers are held in showy clusters that emerge from second year stalks. They are enclosed by scarlet or yellow colored bracts that are 6 to 8 inches long. This unique plant is used as a specimen for tropical gardens. The inflorescence may be cut for indoor decoration where they last for several weeks.

General Information

Scientific name: Heliconia caribaea

Pronunciation: hel-lick-KOE-nee-uh kuh-RIB-ee-uh

Common name(s): Caribbean Heliconia, Wild Plantai

Family: Heliconiaceae

Plant type: herbaceous



Figure 1. Caribbean Heliconia.

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

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: cut flowers; suitable for growing indoors

Availablity: somewhat available, may have to go out

of the region to find the plant

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Description

Height: 10 to 15 feet

Spread: 3 to 6 feet

Plant habit: upright

Plant density: open

Growth rate: fast

Texture: coarse

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate

Leaf type: simpley multi-trunked or clumping

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: ovate

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen

Leaf blade length: more than 36 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: red; yellow

Flower characteristic: spring flowering; summer

flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: unknown

Fruit length: unknown

Fruit cover: unknown

Fruit color: blue

Fruit characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

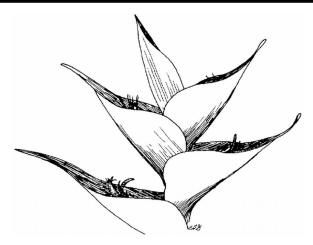


Figure 3. Flower of Caribbean Heliconia

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: typically multi-trunked or

clumping stems

Current year stem/twig color: green

Current year stem/twig thickness: very thick

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part

sun

Soil tolerances: acidic; alkaline; sand; loam; clay;

Drought tolerance: moderate

Soil salt tolerances: moderate

Plant spacing: 36 to 60 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: very sensitive to one or more pests or diseases which can affect plant health or aesthetics

Use and Management

Wild Plantain will prosper in locations that receive full or partial sun. It grows and flowers best in fertile, moist soil. Fertilize this plant regularly during the growing season.

Propagate Wild Plantain by division of the matted clumps.

Pests and Diseases

This plant is bothered by Cercospora and Helminthosporum leaf spots. Scales and nematodes may also cause problems.