Introduction

Lobster-claw is an herbaceous perennial with leathery, dark green leaves which are borne on long petioles arising directly from the ground (Fig. 1). It has 3- to 5-feet-tall stems terminated by a drooping inflorescence. The flowers hang in showy clusters that emerge from second year stalks. They are enclosed by scarlet and 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 rostrata

Pronunciation: hel-lick-KOE-nee-uh ros-STRAY-tuh

Common name(s): Lobster-Claw

Family: Heliconiaceae

Plant type: herbaceous

Figure 1. Lobster-Claw.

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

Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant

Description

Height: 5 to 6 feet
Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Spread: 3 to 6 feet
Plant habit: upright
Plant density: open
Growth rate: fast
Texture: coarse

Foliage
Leaf arrangement: alternate
Leaf type: simple
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: 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

Trunk and Branches
Trunk/bark/branches: typically multi-trunked or clumping stems
Current year stem/twig color: green
Current year stem/twig thickness: thick
Heliconia rostrata Lobster Claw

Figure 3. Flower of Lobster-Claw

**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**

Lobster-claw 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.

Propagation is by division of the matted clumps.

**Pests and Diseases**

None are usually serious. This plant may be bothered by Cercospora and Helminthosporum leaf spots. Scales and nematodes may also cause problems.

Archival copy: for current recommendations see http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu or your local extension office.