

Heliconia rostrata Lobster Claw¹

Edward F. Gilman, Alan Meerow²

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-foot-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

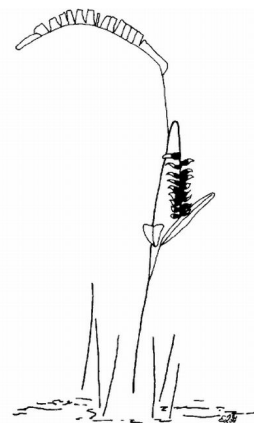


Figure 1. Lobester-Claw.

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

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2. Edward F. Gilman, professor, Environmental Horticulture Department, Alan Meerow, associate professor, Environmental Horticulture Department, Ft. Lauderdale REC, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, 32611

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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

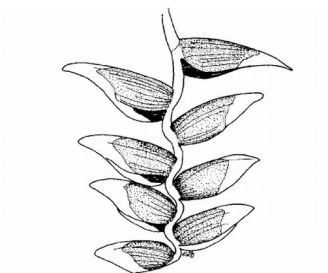


Figure 3. Flower of Lobster-Claw

spots. Scales and nematodes may also cause problems.

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 *Helminthosporium* leaf