

Delonix regia

[Synonyms : *Delonix regia* var. *flavida*, *Delonix regia* var. *genuina*, *Poinciana regia*]

FLAMBOYANT (Dutch, English, French, German) is a deciduous tree. Possibly native to Madagascar it has large, delicately scented, variable scarlet or orange flowers with one petal conspicuously yellow- or white-spotted and with red and yellow stamens.

It is also known as *Alasippu* (Malayalam), Bengal gold mohur, *Deloniko reĝa* (Esperanto), Fancy-anna, Fancy-anny, Fire tree, *Flamarbo* (Esperanto), Flame of the forest, Flame tree, *Flammenbaum* (German), *Framboyán* (Spanish), Golden mohur, Gold mohr, Gold mohur, *Gul-mohar* (Hindi), *Gulmohr* (Marathi, Malay), Gulmohur, Holy Ghost tree, *Mayuram* (Tamil), Peacock flower, *Peddaseribiseri* (Telugu), Pentecost tree, Poinciana, Royal gold mohur, Royal gul mohur, Royal peacock flower, Royal poinciana, and *Yung farang* (Thai).

Botanically a ‘leaf’ of the Flamboyant can consist of 800-1000 tiny leaflets. The tree usually flowers after it is 8 years old.

Flamboyant can be confused with Barbados pride (*Caesalpinia pulcherrima*).

Regia is Latin (royal, regal) meaning ‘royal or princely’.

In parts of the Caribbean the ripe pods are often called ‘woman’s tongue’. This is not particularly complimentary as it is said to be explained by the sound made by the rattling seeds when mature fruit pods are blown in the wind.

Flamboyant is said to have been discovered first in either 1824 or 1828 at Foulpointe on the east coast of Madagascar by an Austrian botanist, Wenzel Bojer (1797-1856). [Some authorities believe that it could have been introduced there, from where it is not clear but possibly from the Island’s western coast, by Arab traders. Bojer, himself, introduced the tree to Mauritius, from where it spread throughout south-eastern Asia where it has become a familiar shade tree, especially in towns. (It is said to have reached Sri Lanka by at least 1841.) Sadly however Flamboyant became rare on Madagascar itself as it succumbed to forest fires and land clearance, but it was rediscovered on the Island in 1932 by Jacques Leandri (1903-1982) and it is said that a small colony of trees now exists there.

The leaves have provided fodder, and in some regions the ripe fruit pods have been used as a fuel. The seeds have been fashioned into necklaces.

Flamboyant is a national flower of Puerto Rico and also a tree emblem of the Northern Marianas. (In 1978 the Northern Mariana Islands, a group of islands which are part of the UN Trust Territory of the Pacific and situated in the western Pacific, came under the administration of the United States.)

Medicinally, the bark has been used in local remedies to treat fever.