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Mexican Bird Of Paradise

Caesalpinia pulcherrima

The joyfully blossoming Mexican Bird of Paradise, commonly known as the Pride of Barbados, its natural habitat, grows countless blossoms on its beautiful, alternate plumed leaves. The red or orange coloured and yellow framed blossoms are seated on up to 40 centimeter long inflorescences, while its stamina and style widely stick out of the blossom. The tannic acid out of its fruits can be used to make ink. As a fast-growing tub plant the Mexican Bird of Paradise can grow up to 2 meters.

Natural location: The Caribbean Islands are the native habitat of the Bird of Paradise. By now it is largely found in parks and on the side of the road in tropical countries.

Cultivation: Seed propagation indoors is possible throughout the year. To increase its germinability, you can slightly roughen the seed with a soft file or a piece of sandpaper and place it in warm water overnight. Plant the seeds about 0.5 cm deep in moist potting compost and cover the seed container with clear film. Don't forget to make some holes in the clear film and take it every second or third day completely off for about 2 hours. That way you avoid mold formation on your potting compost. Place the seed container somewhere bright and warm between 20°C and 25°C and keep the earth moist but not wet. The seedlings will come up after three to four weeks.

Place: The Bird of Paradise likes to be kept somewhere warm and sunny or half-shaded. During the summer you may place the pot or tub outdoors where it is not too windy.

Care: During the growing period between spring and late summer you should give plenty of water, but avoid water logging. To support blossoming you can give special fertilizer for tub plants every two weeks between the months of April and October. Young plants should be cut back regularly to support a bushy growth. After the first blossoming – most likely in the third year – it will be enough to prune once a year. Don't use too big a pot in the beginning, it is better to shift up every two to three years using high-quality earth for tub plants. That way the roots can clot nicely in between.

During the winter: It is recommended to keep the plants bright and between 10° to 12° Celsius during hibernation. Now you can give less water and shower the plant more often with lime-deficient water to prevent spider mite infestation. It is possible, that the Bird of Paradise casts all its leaves. In that case it can even be kept dark with almost no watering and it will sprout again in spring.