

tropical flowers

what defines a tropical flower?

TROPICAL FLOWERS As their category name suggests, tropical flowers are native to the Torrid Zone (a.k.a. Tropical Zone) — the section of the Earth that lies north and south of the equator, between the Tropic of Cancer in the Northern Hemisphere and the Tropic of Capricorn in the Southern Hemisphere. This category comprises *Anthuriums*, *Heliconias*, gingers (several genera), *Calatheas*, *Musas* (ornamental/flowering banana) and orchids*. Tropical flowers are alien to other geographic regions of the world (the Temperate and Polar Zones).

TEMPERATE FLOWERS The regions immediately north and south of the tropics — between either the Tropic of Cancer and the Arctic Circle or the Tropic of Capricorn and the Antarctic Circle — are known as the Temperate Zones, or subtropics, and flowers that are native to those regions are known as temperate or subtropical flowers. In addition to roses, carnations, *Chrysanthemums*, bulb flowers and hundreds of other genera common in the U. S. and Europe, they include *Strelitzia* (bird-of-paradise) and members of the *Proteaceae* family.

We have included *Strelitzia* in this article because these flowers have similar care requirements to tropical flowers. *Proteas* and their relatives, however, are not included because, although they can grow in tropical regions, they are native to South Africa (just south of the tropics) and have care requirements similar to most other subtropical flowers, such as refrigeration at 33 F to 36 F.

*Note about orchids: While most orchids are native to tropical regions, they are not included in this article because they will be featured in a future issue.

vase-life extenders

PROCESSING Immediately remove tropical flowers from their shipping boxes. Check the flower quality, and inspect for insects. If insects are present, spray the flowers with an insecticidal soap (Safer, Garden Safe, Ortho and Bonide are common brands).

You may submerge the flower heads of *Alpinias* (red ginger, shell ginger) and *Anthuriums* in room-temperature water to help hydrate them (*Alpinias*, 30 minutes; *Anthuriums*, two or more hours).

Next, recut the stem ends with a sharp, sterile knife, removing at least 1 inch of stem, then immediately place them into containers half filled with properly proportioned flower-food solution. Some tropical flowers do not benefit from the nutrients in flower-food solutions, but always use flower food with all tropical flowers because other ingredients in them increase water uptake (citric acid) and control bacteria in containers.

Recut stems and change flower-food solution in storage containers every other day.

REFRIGERATION Store tropical flowers at 55 F to 60 F; they are chill sensitive and will sustain damage when stored at temperatures lower than 50 F.

If your floral department does not have a separate tropical flower cooler to accommodate the higher temperature requirements of these special blooms, store them outside the cooler, at room temperature. If you store tropical flowers outside of a floral cooler, mist them generously at least once a day.

ETHYLENE SENSITIVITY Most tropical flowers are fairly resistant to the effects of ethylene gas.

CONSUMER ACTION Instruct consumers to generously mist their tropical flowers at least once a day, provide plenty of fresh flower-food solution and avoid exposing the flowers to direct sunlight. **sf**



Heliconia bihai
(hel-i-KOE-nee-uh bi-HAW-ee)
Lobster claw, Firebird, Macaw flower,
Wild plantain, False plantain, Balisier,
False bird-of-paradise
Photo by Colin Gilliam



Heliconia rostrata
(hel-i-KOE-nee-uh row-STRAW-tuh)
Hanging lobster claw, Hanging *Heliconia*,
Fishtail *Heliconia*



Heliconia caribaea x bihai
(hel-i-KOE-nee-uh ca-REE-bay bi-HAW-ee)
Wild plantain, Balisier



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Alpinia purpurata
(al-PIN-ee-uh pur-poo-RAW-tuh)
Red ginger
Photo by Colin Gilliam



Costus comosus (syn. *C. barbatus*)
(KOS-tus koe-MOW-sus)
Spiral ginger, Spiral flag,
Red tower ginger
Photo by Colin Gilliam



Etlingera elatior
(syns. *Nicolaia*, *Phaeomeria*)
(et-LING-er-uh ee-LATE-ee-or)
Torch ginger, Philippine waxflower
Photo by Colin Gilliam



Zingiber spectabile
(ZIN-juh-bur spek-TAB-ill-lee)
Beehive ginger, Malaysian ginger
Photo by Colin Gilliam



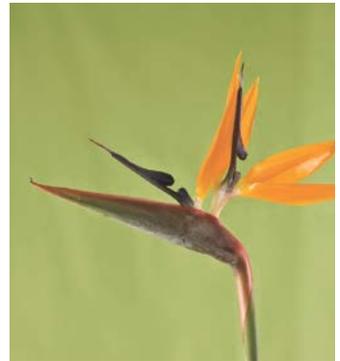
Tapeinochilos ananassae
(tap-in-oh-chil-us an-an-ASS-ay)
Indonesian ginger, Indonesian wax
ginger, Pineapple ginger
Photo by Colin Gilliam



Curcuma longa (syn. *C. domestica*)
(KUR-kyoo-muh long-guh)
Turmeric
Photo by Colin Gilliam



Musa uranoscopus
(myoo-zuh you-ray-no-SKOW-pus)
Flowering banana,
Ornamental banana
Photo by Colin Gilliam



Strelitzia reginae
(stre-LITZ-ee-uh ray-JEEN-ee)
Bird-of-paradise, Crane flower
Photo by Colin Gilliam



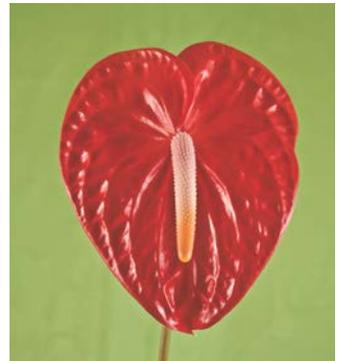
Calathea burle-marxii 'Green Ice'
(kal-uh-THEE-uh burl-MARKS-ee-eye)
Photo by Colin Gilliam



Calathea crotalifera
(kal-uh-THEE-uh krow-tuh-LIF-er-uh)
Rattlesnake flower, Yellow rattleshaker
Photo by Colin Gilliam



Anthurium andraeanum
(an-THOO-ree-um an-dree-AY-num)
Cup-shaped *Anthurium*
Photo from Anthura B.V.



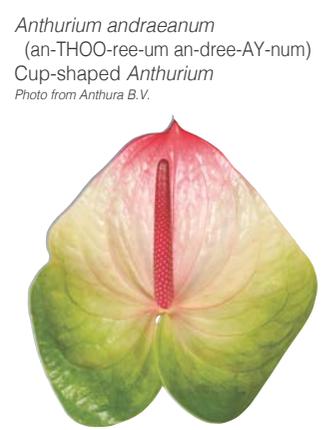
Anthurium andraeanum
(an-THOO-ree-um an-dree-AY-num)
Flamingo flower, Tailflower
Photo by Colin Gilliam



Anthurium amnicola
(an-THOO-ree-um am-ni-COLE-uh)
Tulip *Anthurium*
Photo from Anthura B.V.



Anthurium andraeanum
(an-THOO-ree-um an-dree-AY-num)
Obake *Anthurium*
Mickey Mouse *Anthurium*
Photo from Anthura B.V.



Anthurium andraeanum
(an-THOO-ree-um an-dree-AY-num)
Obake *Anthurium*
Photo from Anthura B.V.



Anthurium andraeanum
(an-THOO-ree-um an-dree-AY-num)
Flamingo flower, Tailflower
Photo from Anthura B.V.

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