

## The Tropical Queen: Bird of Paradise

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**A**mong the vast canvas of tropical flora, few flowers evoke as much wonder and admiration as the Bird of Paradise. Known botanically as *Strelitzia reginae*, this striking ornamental plant is a favourite among gardeners and landscapists. With its vivid orange and blue petals resembling a colourful bird in flight, it has rightfully earned its name and reputation as the “queen of tropical flowers.” It is native to South Africa, the Bird of Paradise was named in honour of Queen Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, wife of King George III, a keen botanist and supporter of botanical gardens. It belongs to the family Strelitziaceae, a small but exquisite group of flowering plants of unique floral architecture. The flower is popular for its exotic appearance. The inflorescence consists of a horizontal green bract (called a *spathe*) from which the flowers emerge, sharp, crane-like flowers that resemble the head of a tropical bird. The bright orange sepals and deep blue petals open sequentially, attracting birds for pollination, especially sunbirds in its native habitat. It is also known as “Tropical Charm for Every Garden”. It is more than just a pretty face. It’s a versatile, low-maintenance plant that thrives in warm, humid climates, making it perfect for tropical and subtropical regions. In tropical countries like India, Thailand, and Indonesia, the plant is often seen gracing gardens, resorts, and botanical parks, adding a splash of colour and elegance.



### Ideal growing conditions of Bird of Paradise

| Sunlight    | : | Full sun to partial shade                           |
|-------------|---|-----------------------------------------------------|
| Soil        | : | Well-drained, rich in organic matter                |
| Watering    | : | Moderate; water when top soil is dry                |
| Temperature | : | Best growth between 20°C–30°C                       |
| Humidity    | : | Prefers high humidity but tolerates moderate levels |

Bird of Paradise is fairly used in landscape design due to its architectural form. Whether planted as a focal specimen, along garden borders, or in containers on patios, it attracts birds. Its large, paddle-shaped leaves resemble those of banana plants and provide a lush, tropical background even when the plant is not in bloom. Moreover, the plant is non-invasive, drought-tolerant once established, and resistant to most pests and diseases, making it an eco-friendly choice for sustainable gardens.

### Commercial significance of BoP

Apart from its ornamental charm, BoP holds symbolic and cultural value. In the language of flowers, it represents freedom, magnificence, and paradise itself. It’s a popular choice in floral arrangements, especially for celebrations, weddings, and high-end decor. As it has a

longer vase life up to 2 weeks, stiff stems and striking colour forms. In horticulture and landscaping education, BoP is used as an example of pollination mechanisms, tropical biodiversity, and aesthetic plant use in design. Its exotic silhouette has inspired fashion, art, and architecture, especially in tropical and coastal regions. Although *Strelitzia reginae* is the most popular species, other species like *Strelitzia nicolai* (White Bird of Paradise) are also used in landscaping and can grow into large, palm-like plants with white and blue flowers.



**White Bird of Paradise - *Strelitzia nicolai***

### **Conclusion: A Garden's Crown Jewel**

The flame-colored blooms, tropical aura, and minimal care needs make it the perfect plant for tropical landscaping. More than a flower, it is a living sculpture, a symbol of paradise. It adds an exotic and royal touch to the gardens. It is simply a “tropical paradise”.

### **Reference**

1. da Silva Vieira<sup>1</sup>, M. R., Lima, G. P. P., de Medeiros, D. C., de Souza<sup>1</sup>, Â. V., & de Oliveira, E. C. A. (2012). Genus: *Strelitzia*. *Journal of Horticulture and Forestry*, 4(11), 178-180.